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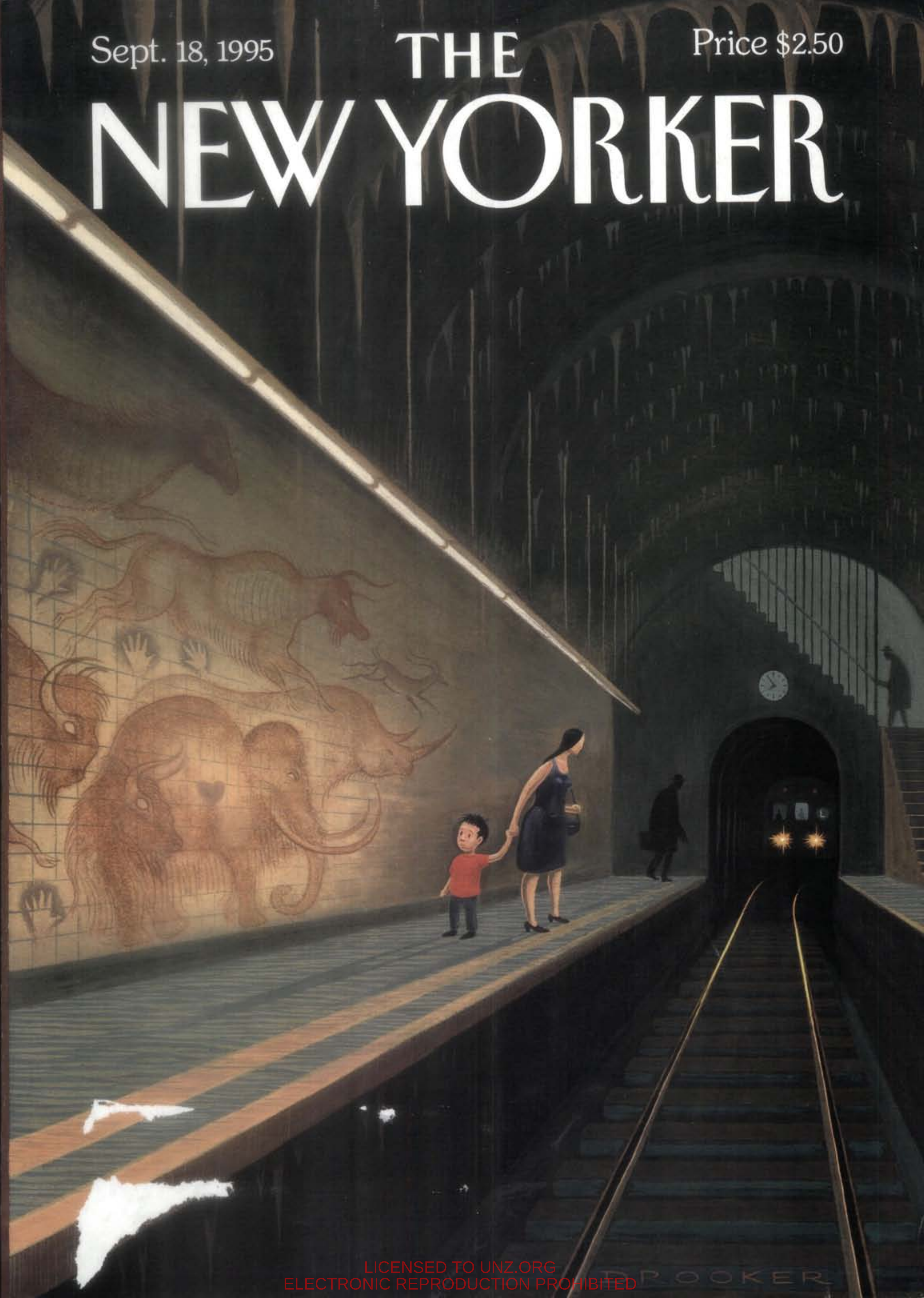

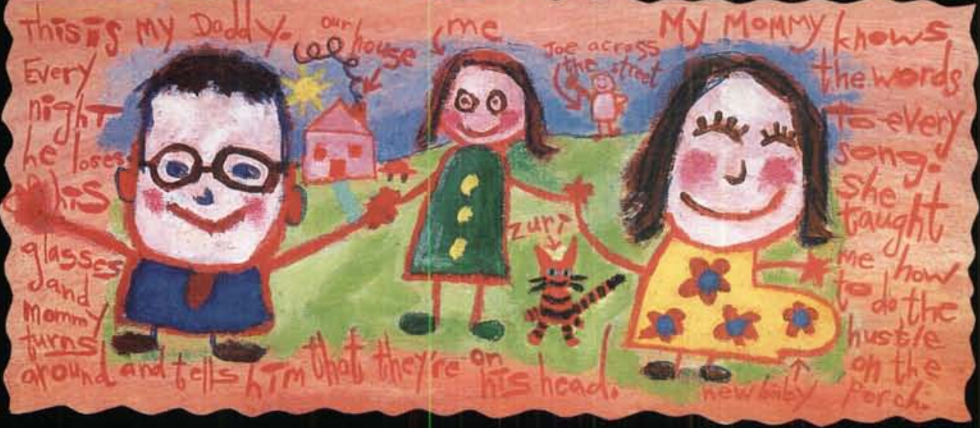
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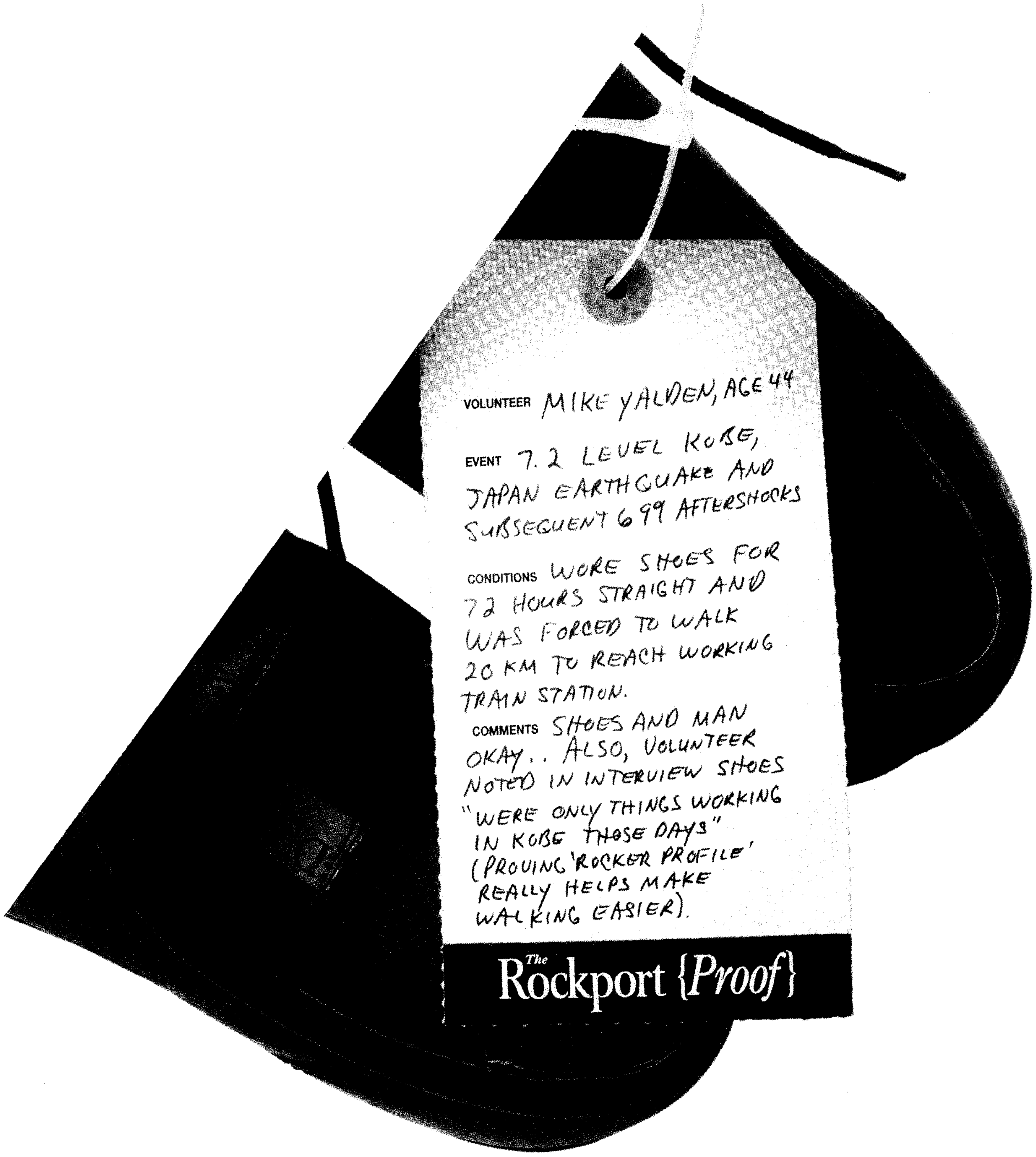

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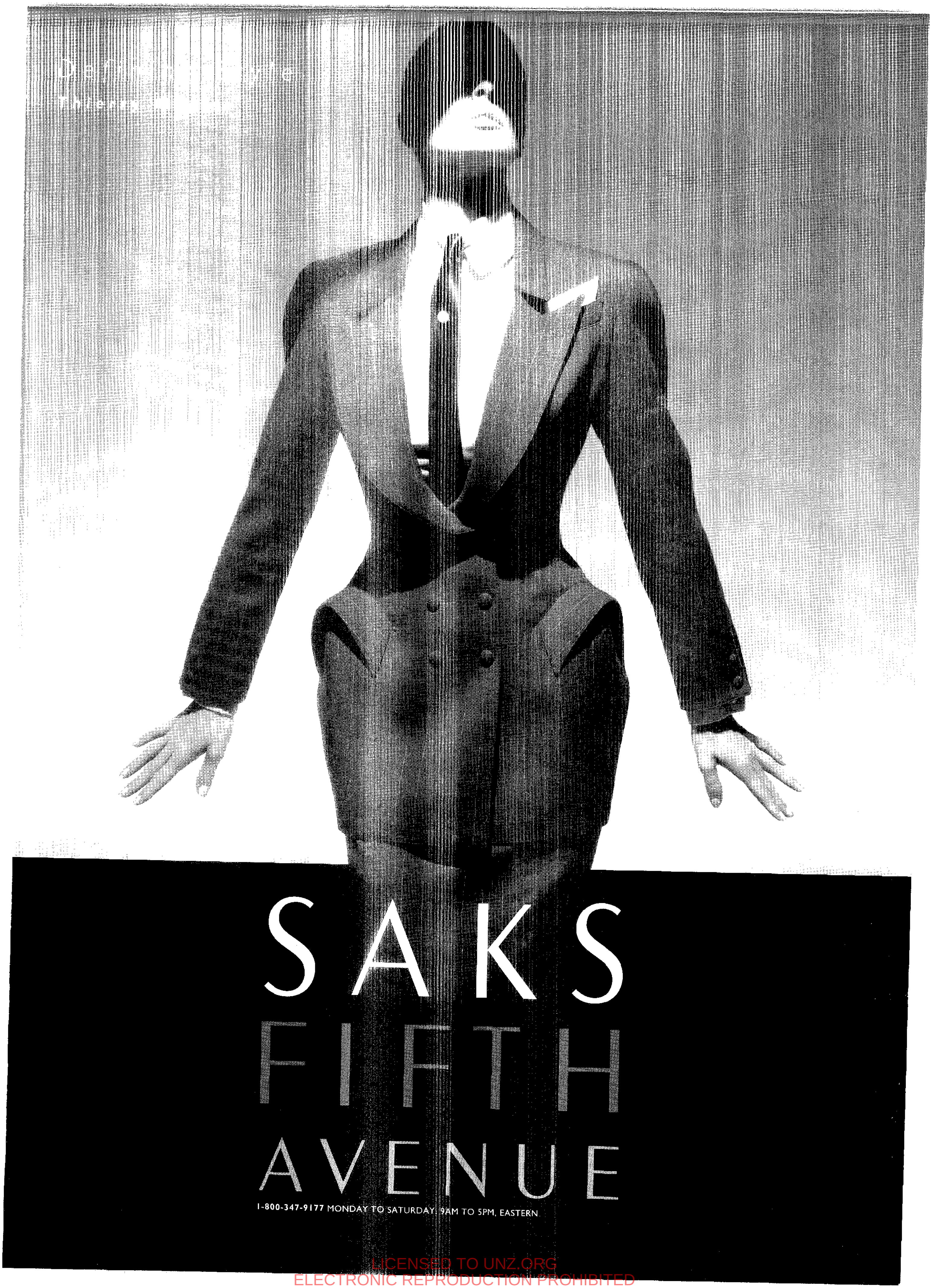
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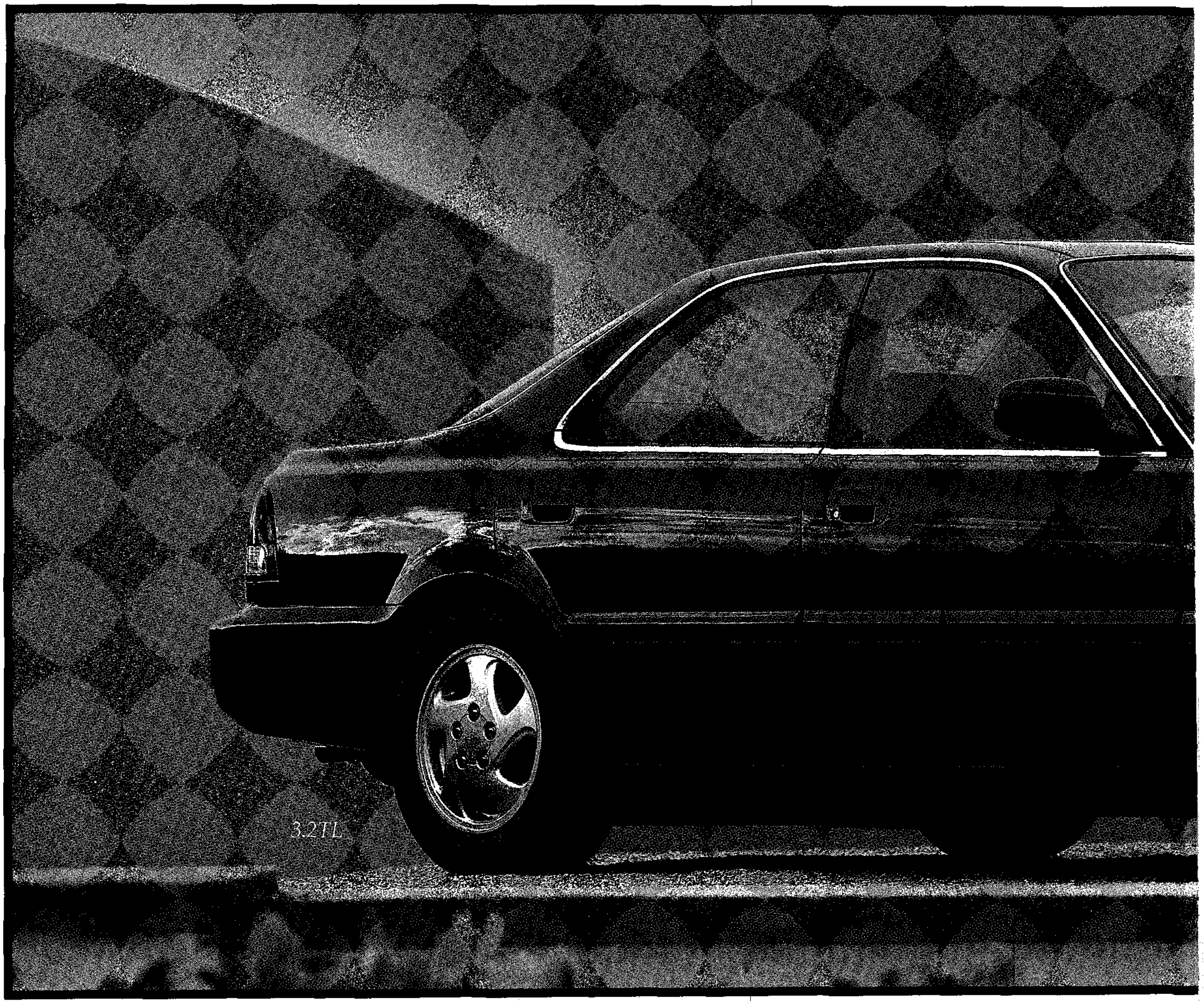

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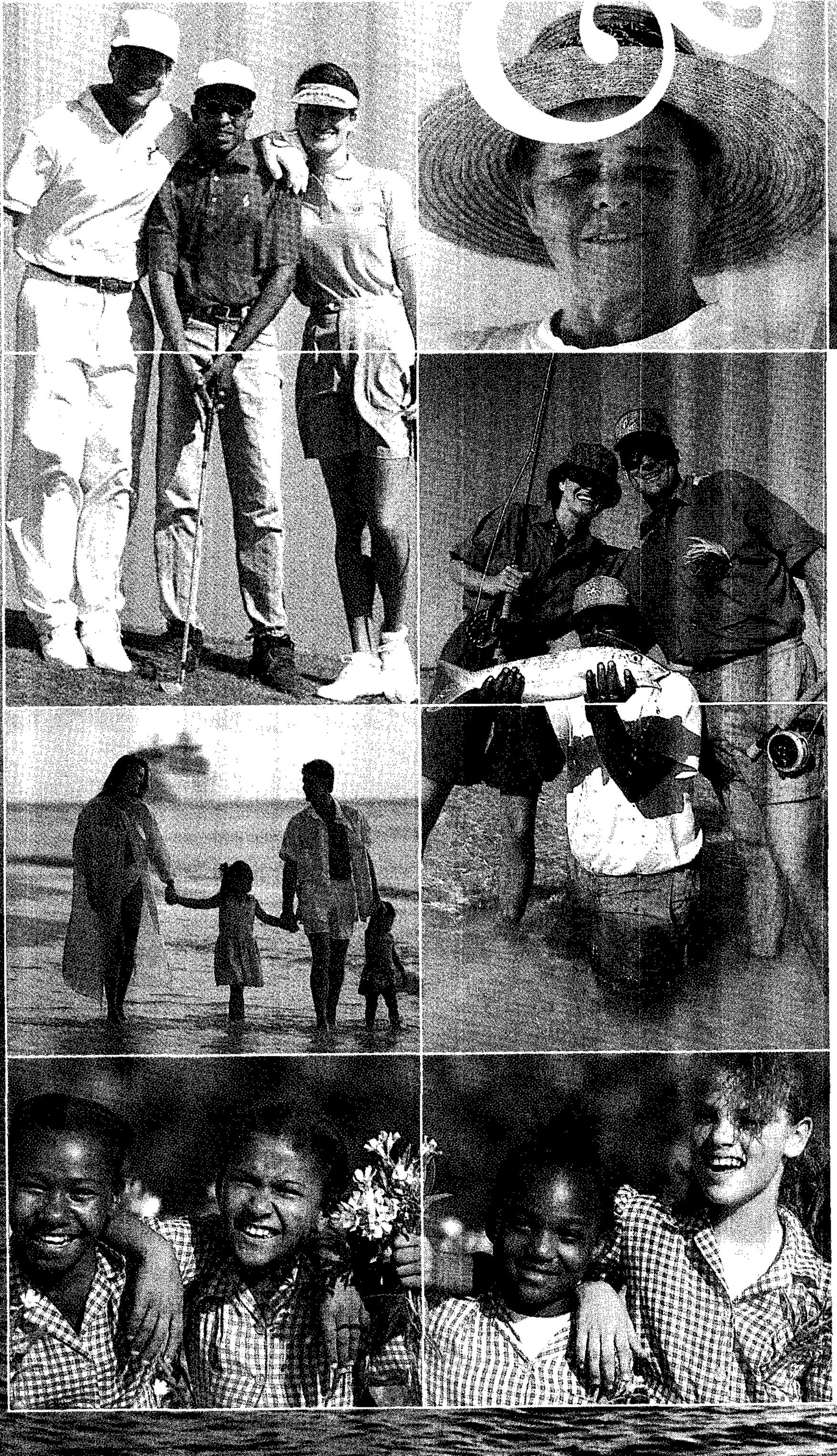

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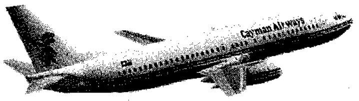

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COMMENT

SENT PACKING

A senator suffers for his own sins, and Congress's.

Bob Packwood's tortured departure from the Senate has many similarities to Richard Nixon's tortured departure from the White House twenty-one years ago. Like Nixon, Packwood remained in office long after his reputation was destroyed, and resigned only when his last remaining supporters abandoned him. Like Nixon, he meticulously recorded incriminating information and then tried to suppress and alter it. Like Nixon, he denied his offenses to the end, tried to discredit his accusers, and relied heavily on procedural and legal arguments to avoid facing the substance of the charges against him. Like Nixon, he insisted that he was resigning for the good of the country. And, like Nixon, in leaving by the door he has saved himself from almost certain defenestration.

In other respects, however, the Packwood case is unique in our history. And it suggests several things about the time we live in. Expulsion from Congress is an extremely rare event. It has happened only once in this century—to Representative Michael Myers, of Pennsylvania, in 1980, after his felony conviction in the Abscam affair. (It would have happened to Senator Harrison Williams, Jr., of New Jersey, for the same reason, in 1982, had he not resigned before the Senate could vote to expel him.) So far, at least, Packwood has been charged with no crimes; and during these last weeks he was not alone in arguing that expulsion was an unduly strong penalty for sexual improprieties, many of which took place long ago.

It is true that much of what Packwood did was little different from what many members of Congress (and many other powerful men) have done routinely, with impunity, for much of our history. Joseph McCarthy was known to make unwanted advances to people who worked for him, and even to casual visitors to his office. Yet, through all the fevered efforts to discredit and destroy him in the nineteen-fifties, it never occurred to his colleagues to raise that issue. Today, everyone on Capitol Hill knows of various members of Congress who have used their position to extract sexual favors, but until recently the problem had remained largely invisible.

Packwood did, indeed, fall victim to a different set of standards from those which most of his predecessors had faced. But that is hardly a defense. Standards

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change as societies change, and we judge one another by how we meet today's expectations, not those of an earlier time. Society no longer tolerates racist diatribes on the floor of the Senate, which were routine during the first half of this century. And now many Americans have ceased to tolerate the kind of cruelty that men like Packwood so casually and unthinkingly inflicted on women for years. Packwood's fall, like the Clarence Thomas hearings, is a signal that this once invisible issue is invisible no more.

The Packwood case also reveals something important about how the Senate itself has changed in the last several years. Last week, members of the Senate Ethics Committee presented their unanimous recommendation to expel Packwood as a principled response to his disgraceful behavior, yet for nearly three years after the accusations surfaced the Senate did virtually nothing about them. And only days before the end Republican leaders were preparing a modest compromise: strip Packwood of his seniority (and thus his chairmanship of the Finance Committee), not of his seat. When Packwood began demanding public hearings, however, he raised the stakes. Republican leaders suddenly had to contemplate the prospect of a humiliating spectacle and of a Senate too paralyzed by it to make progress (if that is the word) on its ambitious right-wing agenda. The shift from censure to expulsion was less a decision based on principle than an act of self-defense.

What finally doomed Packwood was not just his own unpopularity but Congress's. His colleagues repudiated him less because of their moral standards than because of their fears. Members of Congress who owe their seats to public anger have reason to know how quickly such anger could turn on them. Packwood's dishonor threatened to tar them all, and so they abandoned him.

In a sense, then, what Packwood did against his will is not altogether different from what a number of more reputable senators, among them David Pryor, Paul Simon, and Bill Bradley, are doing voluntarily: departing in the face of the public's contempt for Congress and the political process. The Senate is no longer the comfortable, complacent club it was through much of this century, where deals could be quietly brokered and popular clamor could be kept at a safe distance. Bob Packwood would very likely have survived in that Senate. Today's Senate, though, is a mean and at times vicious place, populated by beleaguered and frightened politicians.

There is small reason to celebrate this change. The Senate has traditionally been a source of compromise. But compromise is difficult to come by in the scorched-earth political warfare that now dominates Washington. The most powerful legislative tool in the Senate is no longer the quiet negotiation; rather, it is the filibuster. What was once the relatively infrequent tool of mavericks and regional minorities has become in recent years a routine instrument of obstruction. Even at its best, the Senate is a fundamentally undemocratic institution, constitutionally insulated from public pressure by staggered six-year terms and by the wildly disproportionate power given to senators from small states. And now, when important legislation needs sixty votes, not a simple majority, for passage, it is more undemocratic than ever.

Nevertheless, the Packwood case suggests that one good thing has come out of our savage political climate: for members of the club to protect fellow-members from the just consequences of their actions is now much more difficult. For once, at least, public anger has forced a genuinely democratic result.

—ALAN BRINKLEY

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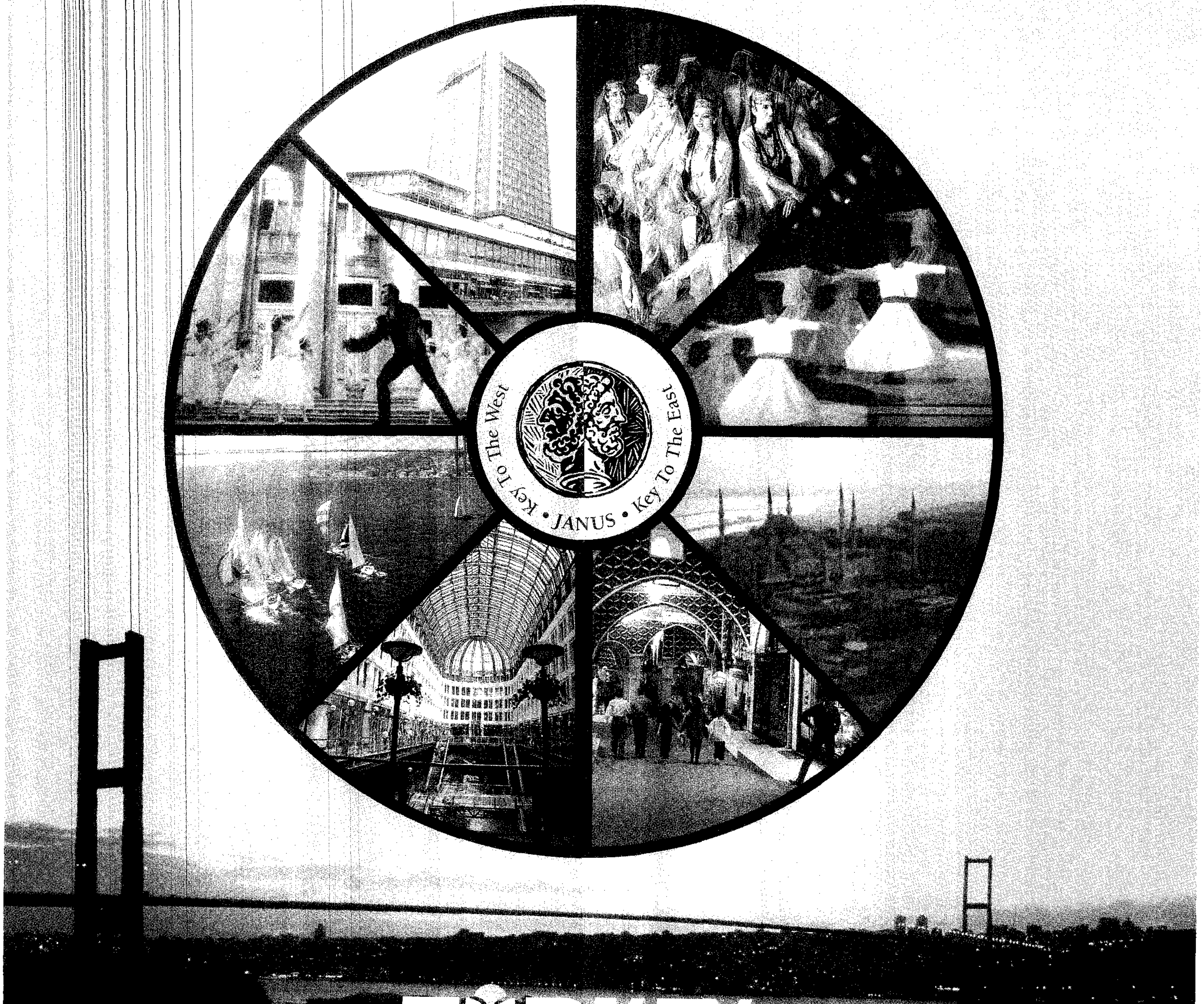

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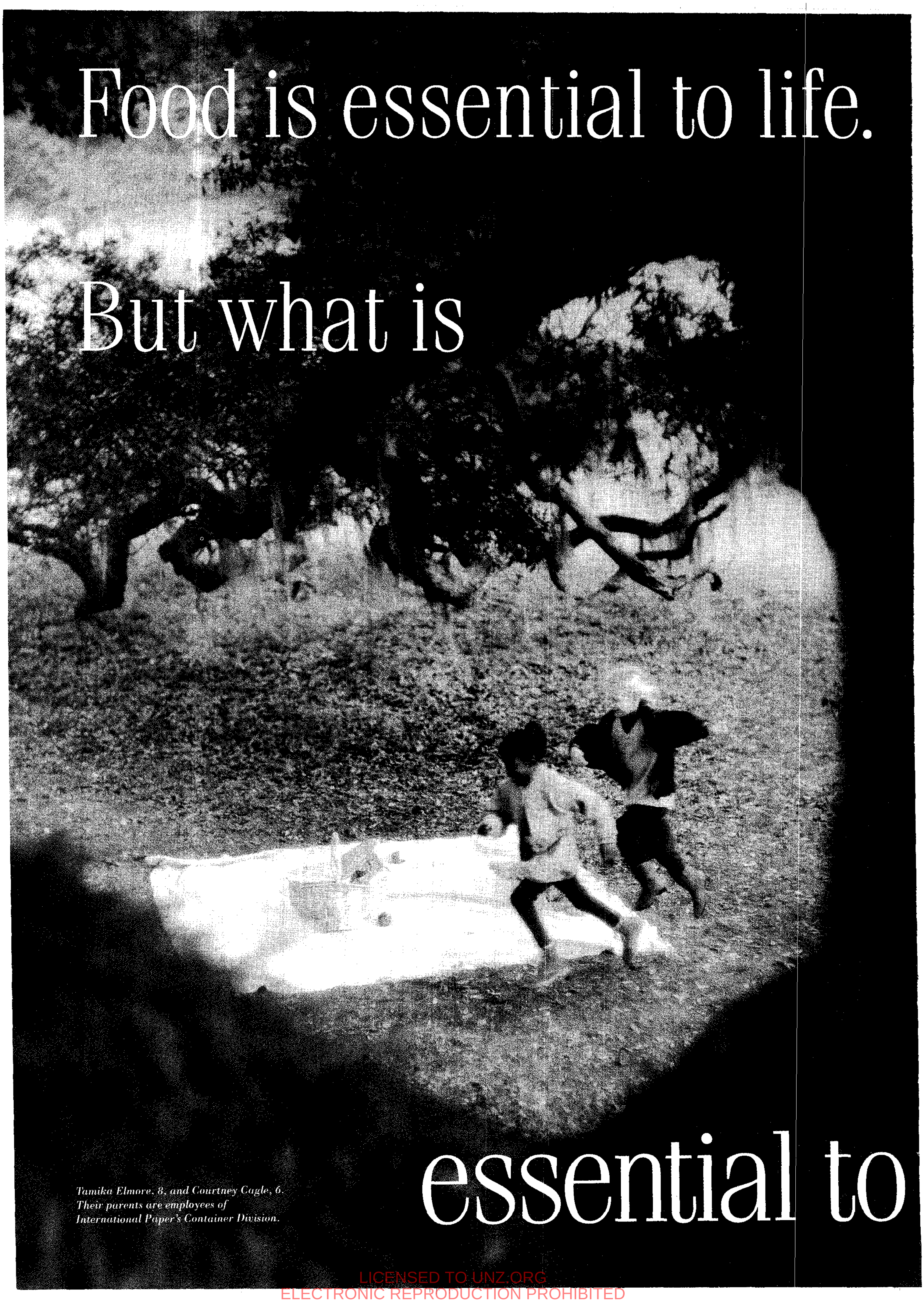
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*Tamika Elmore, 8, and Courtney Cagle, 6.
Their parents are employees of
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IN THE MAIL

DOUBLE TALK

I was dismayed to read in your August 7th edition a story called "A. Burgess, Slightly Foxed" (Fact and Fiction), by Paul Theroux, in which a very unpleasant character with my name said and did things that I have never said or done.

Let me immediately correct one serious misrepresentation. "Anne Theroux" says of the now late Anthony Burgess, "I must confess that I am not a fan," and makes some fatuous comments about his portrayal of women. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have been a Burgess fan for as long as I can remember. In 1980 (the year before the events in the story), I interviewed him for the BBC World Service about his superb novel "Earthly Powers." I treasure my copy, inscribed "To the Theroux family with fond regards" and signed by the author with several kisses. I would have been delighted to have Burgess to dinner at my house, but, alas, it didn't happen.

ANNE THEROUX
London, England

There is a note of disquiet in Mr. Theroux's revealing portrait of Anthony Burgess. In a moving passage early in his essay Theroux enumerates Burgess's human qualities, among them that "he was never cruel." Theroux ends the essay by describing, in excruciating detail, a series of deliberate small cruelties that Burgess took pleasure in inflicting upon a sincere, if unbearably enthusiastic, fan. Though perhaps amusing to relate, the scene cancels the entire effect of the earlier tribute. My sympathies began with Burgess but ended with his reader, Lettfish. It may be, however, that Theroux's real intention was only to warn all those of us who have ever taken pleasure in being a "reader": forgo any pursuit of actual acquaintance with the writer or risk the fate of a Lettfish.

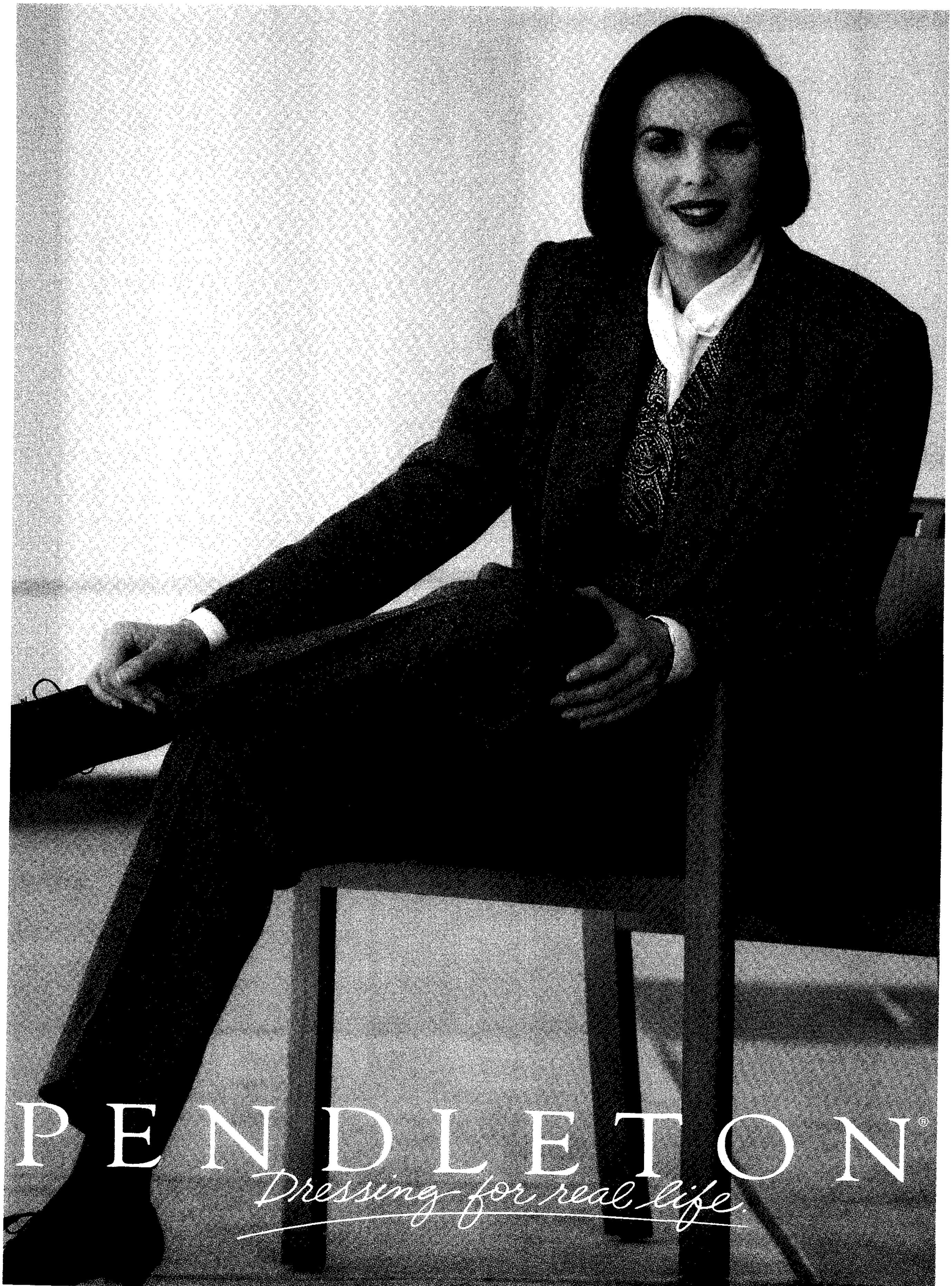
DANA L. ENGLISH
New York City

Great Scott! Paul Theroux relates in his entertaining essay that both he and Burgess had a hard time coming up with writers who went to law school. Sir Walter Scott, a lawyer trained by his father, would have been most amused to find that to Theroux and Burgess he was still the "Great Unknown" (as he was called, because of his preference to remain an anonymous author till late in his career).

HUGH G. C. MACDOUGALL
York, England

DOUBLE VISION

Lawrence Wright, in his fascinating article describing the lessons to be learned from studying identical twins ("Double Mystery," August 7th), failed to fully consider that the extent to which our genes determine our behavior is influenced by our environment. Wright cited a study showing that "the effect of being reared in the same home is negligible for many psychological traits," but he did not note the effect siblings have on one another. I grew up with two older brothers and am familiar with the rivalries that erupt when siblings set the same goals, and I can only assume that the desire I felt to appear different from my brothers is significantly magnified in twins, who would consciously choose interests and activities that do not conflict. Wright reports that identical twins reared together are no more similar than those reared separately, and that fact may tell us a good deal about free will: perhaps the question is not "Na-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ture or nurture?" but "When nature and when nurture?"

Stephen Frick
Prague, Czech Republic

In Mr. Wright's rush to hold genetics responsible for the similar personality configurations of the separated identical twins Amy and Beth, he overlooks an alternative explanation suggested by his own material. Although Wright acknowledges that intense attachments exist between twins even before birth, and that feelings of loss persist into adulthood in twins who have been separated, he fails to consider that the similar psychological symptoms Amy and Beth manifested might have developed in reaction to their shared experience of the traumatic loss of the other twin.

Karen Seeley
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Lawrence Wright's seductive tales of similarities in twins reared apart lead him to an ill-founded and dangerous leap of thought: the traits he dwells upon are largely ones of physical development, personal style, and idiosyncrasy, and similarities in such non-intellectual traits lead him to question the value of education in the face of genetic determinism. Society does not invest in education in order to affect the number of one's cavities, the style of one's shirt, or the names of one's children. Researchers have apparently spent little time measuring differences in what might be considered goals of education: responsible, effective work, parenthood, and citizenship; creativity and a rich inner life; ego strength to cope with life's vicissitudes. Similarities in the way twins walk and laugh and dress are not a sound basis for public policy.

Janet A. Hays
New York City

As a geneticist and a twin, I thoroughly enjoyed "Double Mystery." As soon as it arrived, I called my twin to let him know about it, only to get a busy signal: yes, he was calling me for the same reason.

Willys K. Silvers
Ardmore, Pa.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

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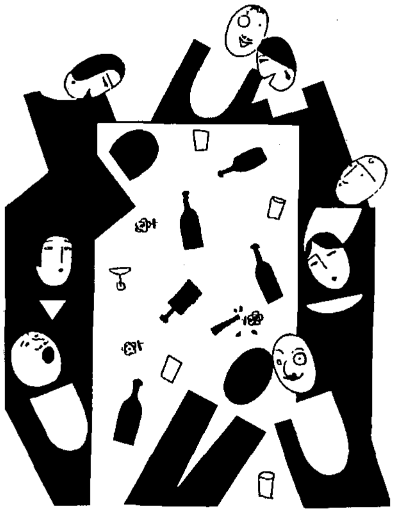

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
17	18	19	13	14	15	16

THE THEATRE

Irish Homestead

If you attend the Irish Repertory Theatre's production of "Same Old Moon" this week, you may find yourself in the company of several Irish carpenters, a group of building-trades students from Redmond Burke's class at the School of Technical Cooperative Education in Manhattan, and a few other constructive types. They'll be special guests at the inaugural production of the company's new home—a former chemical warehouse on West 22nd Street—because they're part of the reason that it exists. The Rep's artistic director, Charlotte Moore, and producing director, Ciaran O'Reilly, had been dreaming of a permanent home for the troupe since they founded it, in 1988. Last year they finally settled on a space, and the real challenges began: their ambitious design called for a ninety-nine-seat theatre and a lobby on the ground floor and a newly dug basement to house dressing rooms and rehearsal space underneath. A fund-raising appeal brought in the money to get started, and it also brought in Mr. Burke, whose classes were looking for a new project.

The opening of the theatre doesn't mean that Moore and O'Reilly can sit back and relax, since they are, respectively, directing and performing in this first show. But you can't mistake their relief when they talk about moving into their new home: "It was either that or quit," O'Reilly says.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Blink of an Eye—Jeremy Dobrish's comic mystery reopens at a new theatre, for a three-week run, starting Sept. 15. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 560-7387.)

Company—The Roundabout Theatre Company opens its thirtieth-anniversary season with a revival of Stephen Sondheim and George Furth's 1970 musical about marriage. The cast includes Boyd Gaines, Debra Monk, Charlotte d'Amboise, and Kate Burton. Directed by Scott Ellis and choreographed by Rob Marshall. In previews. (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

A Doll's House—Ibsen's classic, in a Pearl Theatre Company production directed by Grey Johnson. In previews through Sept. 16. Opens Sept. 17 at 2. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

The Emperor Jones—Kate Valk, Paul Lazar, and Dave Shelley are in the cast of the Wooster Group's production of O'Neill's 1920 play. Opens Sept. 15 and runs through Oct. 1. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)

Floating Rhoda and the Glue Man—Dylan McDermott and Myriam Cyr have the lead roles in Eve Ensler's new comedy, about the sexual adventures of young couples. Directed by Ariel Orr Jordan. Previews through Sept. 13. Opens Sept. 14 at 8. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

Moon Over Buffalo—Carol Burnett and Philip Bosco star in Ken Ludwig's new comedy as husband-and-wife actors playing Buffalo with a touring company. With Randy Graff, Jane Connell, James Valentine, Dennis Ryan, Andy Taylor, and Kate Miller. Tom Moore is the director; Bob Mackie designed the costumes. Previews begin Sept. 13. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Same Old Moon—The Irish Repertory Theatre opens the season in its new home with Geraldine Aron's comic memory play, about a fortyish playwright whose marriage has broken up. Previews begin Sept. 14. (132 W. 22nd St. 279-4200.)

Sin—Kelly Coffield plays an aerial traffic reporter in this comedy by Wendy MacLeod. Directed by David Petrarca. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Standing By—A romantic comedy by Norman Barasch, starring Gregg Edelman and Cynthia Watros as a couple who meet on a plane. In previews through Sept. 13. Opens Sept. 14 at 8. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

Working Class—Richard Hoehler's play, recently seen at the Edinburgh Festival, takes a look at American laborers. Opens Sept. 14 at 8 and runs through Oct. 8. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-9434.)

OPENED RECENTLY

After-Play—Anne Meara's comedy, about two couples who get together for an after-theatre dinner, stars Ms. Meara, Barbara Barrie, Larry Keith, and Merwin Goldsmith. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/13/95.) (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

Cute Boys in Their Underpants—A return engagement of Robert Coles's comedy, set during rehearsals for a junky gay play of the same title. (Sanford Meisner, 164 Eleventh Ave., at 22nd St. 206-1764. Closes Sept. 17.)

Death Defying Acts—Three subpar one-act comedies, by David Mamet, Elaine May, and Woody Allen, that have the words "Written to Order" stamped all over them. (3/20/95) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

A Dream Play—The Independent Theatre Company opens its eighth season with August Strindberg's despairing meditation on the difficulties of life, movingly directed by Paul Todaro. Although the play is sometimes more lecture than drama, the cast is strong; Rajesh Bose, in particular, is good at bringing out the script's dark humor. Still, Strindberg's constant refrain of "Alas for mankind!" does seem, by the end, like the only appropriate response to the characters' pitiful problems. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088.)

Ecstasy—Mike Leigh's play takes place in a dismal North London flat in the winter of 1979. The late-seventies costumes and set are depressingly perfect, and the actors bring the six working-class characters to life with great specificity and vitality. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Food Chain—In Nicky Silver's new play, the paths of five New Yorkers cross, hilariously. The situations are familiar and sitcomish, but the writing is tangy and memorably funny, and the actors—especially Hope Davis, as a dithery poet, and Phyllis Newman, as a long-suffering Jewish matron whose idea of listening is to talk—give smart, wonderfully fresh performances. Robert Falls, the artistic director of Chicago's Goodman Theatre, directed. (9/11/95) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Bloolips, in "The Island of Lost Shoes."

TOBY MORRISON

For the past three years, Chrysler Corporation has been honoring outstanding designers. By showcasing great innovations in fields such as graphic, interactive, product, architectural, and environmental designs, Chrysler strives to bring well-deserved attention to those designers whose common attribute is a

FRANK O. GEHRY

passionate commitment to their vision. ■ Frank O. Gehry has broken with the perceived conventions of architecture for over 30 years with consistency and unfailing verve. His firm, Frank O. Gehry and Associates, has profoundly and imaginatively reinvented architectural expression in format, materials,

ROBERT M. GREENBERG

and technological arenas. ■ With his bicoastal company, R/GA Digital Studios, Robert M. Greenberg has pioneered new media on both the creative and technological frontiers. R/GA's images and special effects have been designed for all platforms, from feature films to broadcast TV

RALF HOTCHKISS

and from print to interactive multimedia. ■ A consultant to wheelchair manufacturers in developing countries throughout the world and technical director of the Wheeled Mobility Center, Ralf Hotchkiss has radically altered both the design and the process of producing wheelchairs. Through his research, he has developed state-of-the-art, all-terrain wheelchairs with a network

REVERB

of builders in over 25 developing countries. ■ Reverb is a collective of five partners distinguished by their unconventional work in the conventional medium of graphic design. They collaborate with a diverse group of clients from grassroots community centers to large corporations.

SITE

■ Founded in 1970, SITE is an interdisciplinary group of artists, architects, and designers who advocate social and environmental responsibility through its diverse range of projects. The group's integration of nature in the construction of buildings, sculpture, parks, and waterfront development has resulted in

PHILIP ZIMMERMANN

environmentally responsive and functionally effective buildings and spaces. ■ Philip Zimmermann is the designer of Pretty Good Privacy (PGP), an E-mail encryption software. Thanks to the algorithms of PGP, which was released to the public as free software in 1991, E-mail messages can be sent securely all over the world without risk of interception by any third party.

Congratulations to all the winners of the 1995 Chrysler Award of Innovation in Design.

CHRYSLER CORPORATION

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For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf—Ntozake Shange directed this twentieth-anniversary production of her consciousness-raising play about black womanhood in America. It's still so fresh that after two decades it seems like it was written yesterday. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 346-8510. Closes Sept. 24.)

A Greater Good—Keith Huff's comedy follows the adventures of a suburban housewife out to change the world. Directed by Mark Hunter. (Miranda, 259 W. 30th St. 268-9829. Closes Sept. 30.)

Having Our Say—Sadie and Bessie Delany, two sisters who have passed the hundred-year mark, presented their vivid life stories in a 1993 best-seller; the book has been adapted beautifully from the page to the stage by Emily Mann, who also directed. Gloria Foster and Mary Alice are brilliant as the sisters, who, taught by their family to "reach high" despite the dogging of Jim Crow, became a teacher and a dentist. The show is both a portrait of a remarkable relationship and an unsentimental depiction of service, accomplishment, and pride. (4/24/95) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Heiress—A revival of Ruth and Augustus Goetz's 1947 adaptation of Henry James's "Washington Square," directed by Gerald Gutierrez. Cherry Jones, who plays the title character, is exquisitely—almost unbearably—vulnerable. And the wonderful Frances Sternhagen is touching and funny as a widowed aunt. (3/20/95) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

House of Bugs: A Biological Tragedy—Richard Foreman's Ontological Theatre presents a multimedia play by Kevin Cunningham, concerning the rationalizations of a heroin addict involved in a destructive sexual relationship. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650. Closes Sept. 24.)

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying—In this revival of Frank Loesser's 1961 musical, Matthew Broderick has polish and timing, but it's Lillias White's gospel solo in "Brotherhood of Man" that lifts the audience into a zone of joy. (4/24/95) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Incognito Sex—Linda Hill examines the tangled path of her sex life in a new solo work. Mondays at 7:30, through Sept. 25. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)

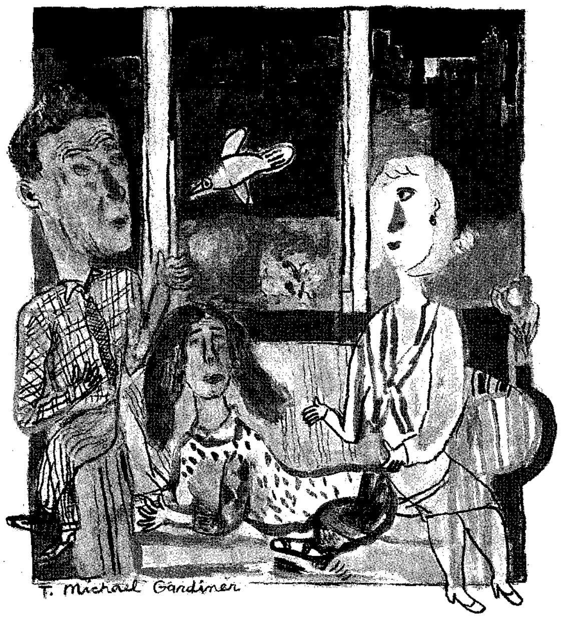
Indiscretions—This production of Jean Cocteau's "Les Parents Terribles," a dark comedy about the perversities of desire in family life, is marred by heavy-handedness and an unsatisfying central performance: Kathleen Turner, playing a hysterically possessive mother, is an unfocussed sprawl with a distractingly unplaceable accent. Roger Rees, Cynthia Nixon, and Jude Law also star, under the direction of Sean Mathias. (5/15/95) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Island of Lost Shoes—The gay British troupe known as Bloolips—Bette Bourne, Lavinia Co-op, Naughty Knickers, Bella, and Harmony—brings its new show to town. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Wednesdays through Sundays at 7:30. Through Sept. 24.)

John & Jen—Andrew Lippa and Tom Greenwald's musical, which explores problems of love and family, is often hackneyed and repetitive, though it's well staged by Gabriel Barre. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Language of One—A deaf, gay, Jewish architect sets out to "find his people and his place" by leaving his deaf Jewish family and settling in the gay community, which fails to provide the insight he is searching for. Eventually he meets the man of his dreams, only to discover that happiness doesn't come from other people. The show, co-written by its director, Drew Emery, and star, Lewis Merkin, is smart, thought-provoking, and—through the use of a technique called shadowing (in which characters are assigned two actors, one signing, one speaking)—accessible to both deaf and hearing viewers. Margaret Arnold (who signs) is terrific as a fretful, protective mother. A production of the New York Deaf Theatre. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 683-9772, voice/use relay. Closes Sept. 24.)

Math and Aftermath—Jim Grimsley's play is set in 1953 on the Marshall Islands' Bikini atoll, the day before one of the United States' infamous atomic-bomb tests, during the filming of a gay porn movie. (Camilla's, 44 Walker St. 925-9456. Closes Sept. 30.)



John Cunningham, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Mariette Hartley, in "Sylvia."

A Midsummer Night's Dream—Gorilla Repertory Theatre's annual free outdoor production in Washington Square Park, directed by Christopher Carter Sanderson, runs through Sept. 24. (For more information, call 330-8086.)

Mister Lincoln—Herbert Mitgang's monodrama stars William Walsh as Honest Abe. Directed by Kurt Wagemann. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 581-4125. Closes Oct. 1.)

The Only Thing Worse You Could Have Told Me . . .—Greg Louganis has taken over for Dan Butler in Mr. Butler's one-man show, a procession of characters from the real world of contemporary gay culture. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 307-4100.)

Party—Seven gay men get together to play a strip version of truth or dare, with terrifically funny (if occasionally didactic) results. The characters in David Dillon's comedy are stereotypes, more or less, but the solid cast makes them believable, and in the end you've had a look at some enduring friendships (and some nice bodies). (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.)

Pets!—Helen Butleroff, together with seventeen writers, composers, and lyricists and five engaging actors, has created the perfect theatrical beach novel, about people and their pets. The evening has its slow bits, but its charm and silliness consistently win out. How can you lose with a show in which a lovelorn iguana sings a tango? (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 307-4100.)

Rob Becker's Defending the Caveman—A hundred-minute standup routine. Some of Becker's examples of discontent between the sexes are very funny (a lot of vigorous nodding goes on in the theatre—never by men and women at the same time), but a fair number of them are shopworn. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

The Secret Annex—A new musical about Anne Frank and her family. With Patricia Ann Gardner as Anne, and Don Frame as her father, Otto, from whose point of view the story is told. Book by Robert Carr; music by William Baton. Dom Ruggiero directs. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller—A feast of early rock and roll, performed by a cast with Grade A lungs and legs. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Swingtime Canteen—A re-creation of a 1944 U.S.O. concert, performed in a night club. Extraneous bits of plot threaten to derail the show, but the lovely songs, done with verve and charm, carry the day. Charles Busch, donning drag again, and Maxene Andrews have joined the cast. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Sylvia—In A. R. Gurney's new comedy, Sarah Jessica Parker, as a dog named Sylvia, brings meaning to the life of a middle-aged currency trader (John Cunningham) while driving a canine-shaped wedge between him and his wife (Mariette Hartley). Parker has some funny moments, but this upper-middle-class fairy tale settles too soon into a monotonous sweetness; it lacks bite. John Tillinger directed. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Tons of Money—Alan Ayckbourn's adaptation of Will Evans and Valentine's 1922 farce on the theme of greed. (Synchronicity Space, 55 Mercer St. 713-5334. Closes Sept. 24.)

Too Jewish?—Avi Hoffman sets about reviving Yiddish in this mixture of songs and stories. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind—The Neo-Futurists, a troupe from Chicago, perform thirty original two-minute plays in one hour. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 330-8087. Thursdays through Saturdays at 11 p.m.)

Travels with My Aunt—Giles Havergal, directing his own witty adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, has captured the book's amusingly puzzled tone with his playful, inventive (though overlong) staging. Four wildly different actors all play Henry Pulling, the staid retired banker whose eccentric Aunt Augusta drags him into her international adventures; one doubles as Aunt Augusta, and the other three skillfully handle some twenty additional parts. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 420-8000.)

2 Boys in a Bed on a Cold Winter's Night—James Edwin Parker's comic tale is about how not to behave during a one-night stand, but it's also a sharp-eyed exploration of emotional intimacy. Robert Gomes and Michael Curry make the grown-up boys sympathetic without being mushy. Directed by Thomas Caruso. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 279-4200. Closes Sept. 17.)

Waiting for Godot—Beckett's play, presented by the Jean Cocteau Repertory, under the direction of Eve Adamson. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

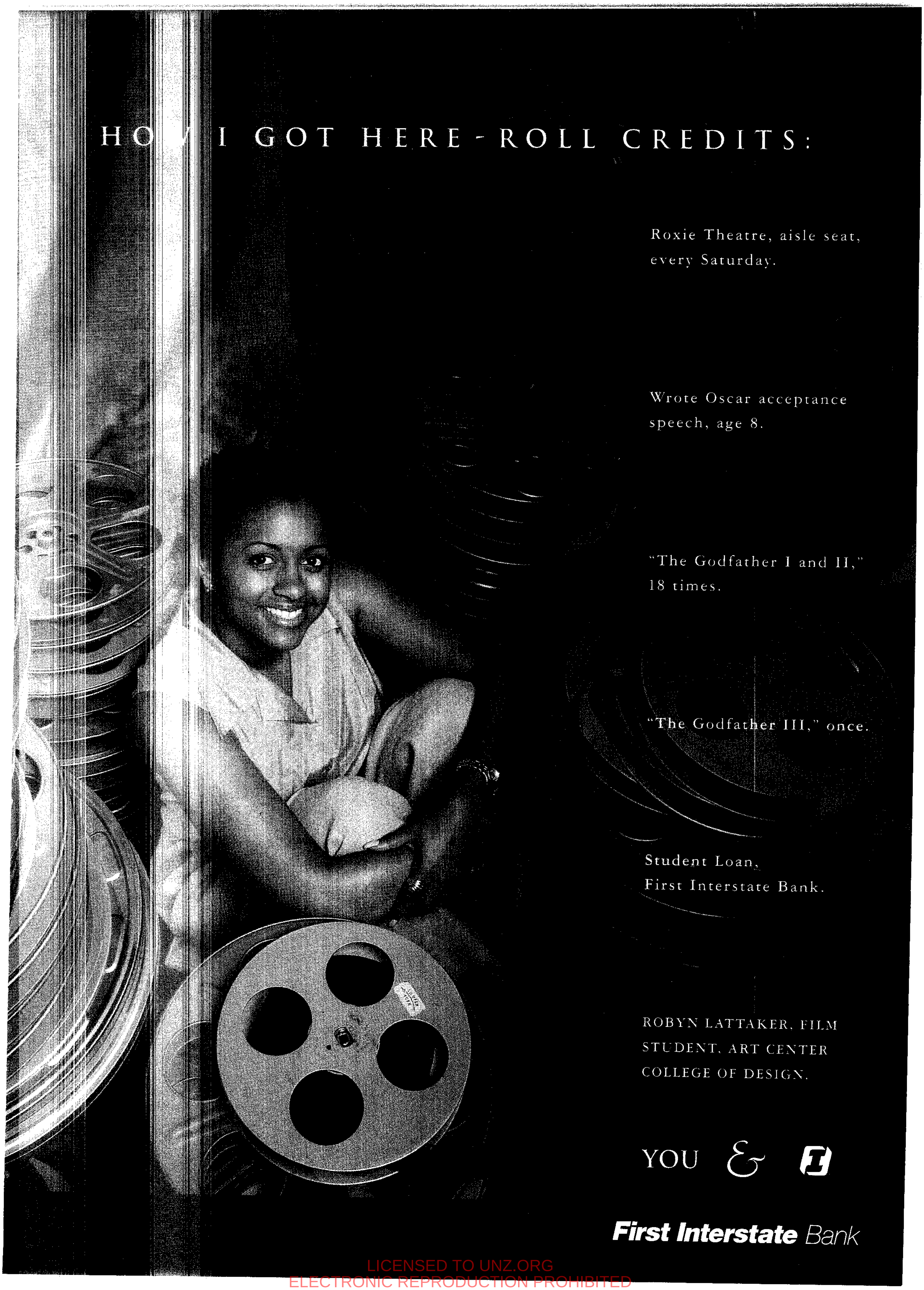
The Wallenberg Mission—A Love Creek production of Nicholas Wenckheim's play, about the Swedish diplomat and businessman Raoul Wallenberg, who rescued thousands of Hungarian Jews during the Second World War. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 769-7973. Closes Sept. 24.)

What You Said—The improv company Chicago City Limits presents a brand-new revue, featuring its ever-popular five-minute musical. (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP / TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-

T. MICHAEL GARDINER



HOW I GOT HERE-ROLL CREDITS:

Roxie Theatre, aisle seat, every Saturday.

Wrote Oscar acceptance speech, age 8.

"The Godfather I and II," 18 times.

"The Godfather III," once.

Student Loan, First Interstate Bank.

ROBYN LATTAKER, FILM STUDENT, ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN.

YOU &

First Interstate Bank

4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **LOVE! VALOUR! COMPASSION!:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 17. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

DANCE

COMPAGNIE MAGUY MARIN—The Joyce Theatre opens its fall season with "Waterzooi," choreographed by the French dance aphorist Maguy Marin (and named after a Belgian goulash). Vaudevillean pace and wry narration keep Marin's dancers moving: in one section, for example, the troupe puts on cow masks in a reference to the French processed cheese with the laughing spokescow. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. The engagement begins on Sept. 19 at 8 and runs through Sept. 30.)

SHAWN MCCONNELOUG & HER ORCHESTRA—Three dance works ("Corporal Mortification," "Snowball," and the duet "Shoes") and two short films ("Souvenir" and "It's Like Lies . . . .") from the athletic troupe. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Sept. 14-16 at 8.)

"LITTLE BY LITTLE, SHE SHOWED UP"—In the process of creating their new evening-length work, Susan Rethorst and her collaborators—Karen Weber, David Thomson, and a troupe of twenty additional dancers—handed the unfinished piece over to a series of choreographers (including Tere O'Connor and Scott deLahunta), with instructions to cut, add to, or rework it according to their own muse, then pass back the new version the next day. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Sept. 14-17 at 9.)

ST. PETERSBURG MALE BALLET—Ten Russian dancers will perform all the roles in two evenings of excerpts from classical repertory ("Swan Lake," "Paquita," the dance of the lively beauties from "The Little Humpbacked Horse," etc.). The company insists that its men are not taking up toe shoes as camp, even though Odile, in this version of the "Black Swan" pas de deux, does dwarf her Siegfried. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Sept. 15-16 at 8.)

"RED RUM & OTHER STORIES"—The five members of Rosa Mei Dance blend modern movement and martial arts in five live works and three short films employing elements of kung fu and capoeira. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Sept. 14-17 at 8:30.)

"WOODY'S LAST FLING"—The musical floor of Woodpeckers Tap Dance Center will be laid to rest, jazz funereally, in a final dance jam. The memorial party is open to the public, and anyone so moved is encouraged to strap on taps and hoof it. (170 Mercer St. Sept. 15, from 7 to 10. For more information, call 219-8284.)

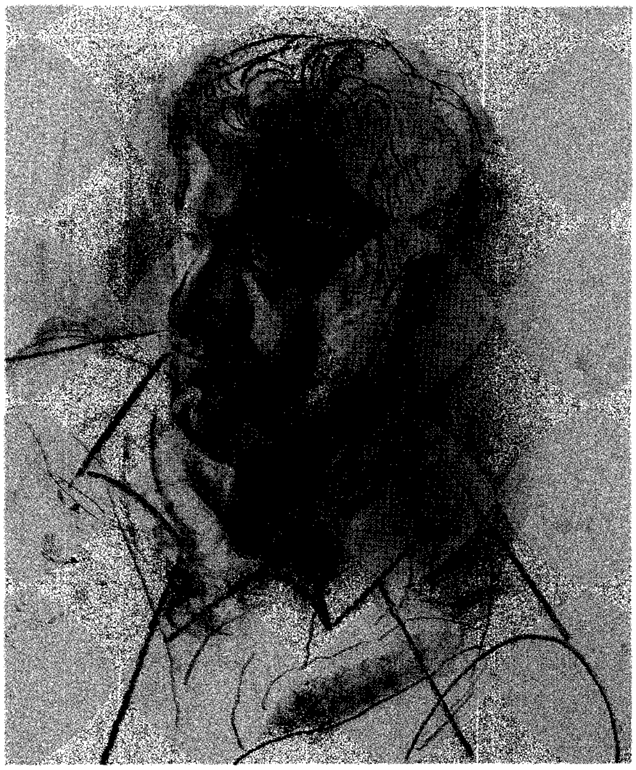
MOVEMENT RESEARCH AT THE JUDSON CHURCH—The weekly series of free performances begins with two solos from Andrea E. Woods and a duet from Patricia Hoffbauer and George Emilio Sanchez. (Judson Memorial Church, 55 Washington Square S. For reservations, which are necessary, call 477-6854. Sept. 18 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

Lights, Camera, Combo

THE strange and popular San Francisco revue known as the Billy Nayer Chronicles will bring its daft mix of music and film to New York this week, but when the four-piece outfit takes the stage at the Knitting Factory, on September 17, you won't find Billy Nayer in the house—because Billy Nayer doesn't exist. "He's a brand name, like Uncle Ben's," says Cory McAbee, the band's lead singer, a stern-faced thirty-four-year-old former bouncer, "a dissected personality, a way of getting at the more embarrassing parts of being human." Because of McAbee's position as front man for the neo-punk cabaret band, and perhaps because of his commanding stage presence and his fondness for suits, audiences often assume that he is Nayer. "People have told me they find me frightening yet endearing. What could be better?"

Billy Nayer came into being six years ago, when a few friends started playing clubs together. But the stage wasn't big enough for McAbee—the screen beckoned. To finish his first short, a piece of hand-painted animation called "Billy Nayer" (it featured a barroom drunk who breaks out in song), he had to turn his bathroom into a darkroom. He used a toy camera to film his next one, the semi-autobiographical "The Man on the Moon." His latest, a thirty-minute live-action musical fantasy titled "The Ketchup and Mustard Man" (in which a guy costumed to resemble the Elephant Man spins a series of peculiar tales), won the Best Short Film award at this year's Chicago Underground Film Festival. All three will be screened at the Knitting Factory show. McAbee says that the Billy Nayer Chronicles "isn't like anything that's out there," and that when people watch the films, "they laugh at things they don't normally talk about. Certain vulgarities are foisted on the audience—gracefully."



Cory McAbee, with the Billy Nayer Chronicles, at the Knitting Factory.

DAVID TOMB

CONCERTS

JOAN OSBORNE—This radiant singer-songwriter from Kentucky is a late bloomer: she didn't release her first album, "Soul Show" (1991), until she was almost thirty. Now she's making up for lost time. Her barn-burning rasp has been compared to Bonnie Raitt's, and her knack for finding profundity in humdrum themes suggests Bruce Springsteen. On her latest record, "Relish," she reconciles divine imagery and worldly pleasures—not bad for a woman who discovered her calling during a drunken open-mike session at a bar. With Widespread Panic. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 247-0200. Sept. 14 at 7:30.)

HENRY THREADGILL—The multi-instrumentalist leads a trio. (Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. Sept. 14 at 5:30. No tickets necessary.)

ERIC CLAPTON—Over the course of a thirty-year career, Old Slowhand has been everything from rock-guitar godhead to avatar of mellow. His most recent record, "From the Cradle," appears to be a whole new chapter—a blue period of sorts. It's an homage to the stark, brokenhearted blues of the guitarist's influences: Freddy King, Willie Dixon, and Muddy Waters, to name a few; a raw, tender outpouring of almost bottomless pain. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Sept. 17-18 at 8. . . . ¶ Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. Sept. 19 at 8.)

MIKE SCOTT—The former lead singer of the Waterboys, the Irish rock band, in an acoustic performance. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Sept. 18 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Tangy-voiced singer **WESLIA WHITFIELD** (in through mid-October) interprets the American popular canon with an understated, intelligent spin. Her early set features songs by Harry Warren and Victor Young, and in her late one she'll do selections from her aptly titled new CD, "Nice Work." Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, smells, and feels like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. Through Sept. 17: the **RON CARTER** quintet. Few can touch Carter on the bass, and even fewer can come close on the piccolo bass, the high-pitched mutant that the master trots out for his own gigs. The **BENNY BAILEY** quintet takes over on Sept. 19. A European expatriate since the sixties, Bailey possesses a burnished trumpet tone and the wisdom of an old-school New York hard-bopper. Welcome home. He's joined by saxophonist Jimmy Heath, who should be able to match Bailey's élan and skill. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

VISIONES, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Sept. 17: **CHRIS ANDERSON** leads a trio. With only a handful of recordings and just a few sporadic appearances over the course of a forty-year career, this pianist safely qualifies as a legend. His lyrical bop rings with eccentricity and experience, and it has the cleansing power of authenticity.

ROCK, ETC.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 14: **KINKY FRIEDMAN.** With such delicate titles as "Ride 'em Jewboy," it's easy to see why Friedman is too outrageous for the country-music orthodoxy. "Get Your Biscuits in the Oven and Your Buns in the Bed" didn't exactly endear him to the folk community, either. No wonder he turned to writing mystery novels. A true American original. With **RIDERS IN THE SKY.** Sept. 15-16: **BLUES PROJECT.** Back in 1965, Al Kooper's striking mix of blues, folk, and jazz made his crew the darlings of the Greenwich Village in-crowd, at least until the arrival of the Loving Spoonful and the Velvet Underground.

BROWNIES, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Sept. 14: The Very Pleasant Neighbor. Sept. 16: Life in a Blender.

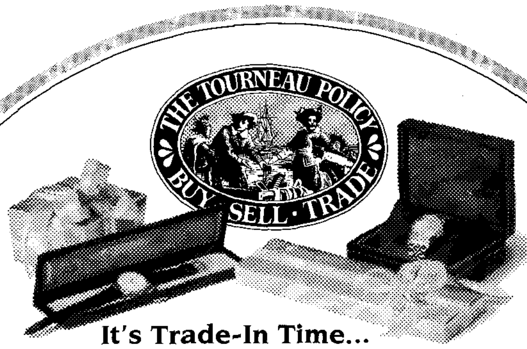
DOWNTIME, 251 W. 30th St. (695-2747)—A friendly split-level bar with a dazzling quasi-Cubist paint job and an above-average pool table.

DUPLEX, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **DRESSING ROOM DIVAS** are in the house every Friday night.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. Sept. 13: **FREEDY JOHNSTON.** This young singer-songwriter from Kansas writes remarkably literate, haunting songs. He brings a country-punk spirit to folk-rock music, and he has a shot at attracting the kind of intelligent audience that Mary Chapin Carpenter has built for herself. His last album, "This Perfect World," was one of last year's keepers. Sept. 15: **PIERCE TURNER.** Sept. 16: **SUSAN MC KEOWN AND THE CHANTING HOUSE.** The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IBIS SUPPER CLUB, 327 W. 44th St. (262-1111)—Live music, belly dancing, and an honest-to-God whirling dervish, every Wednesday through Sunday.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Sept. 15: **SOUL COUGHING.** Last year, this groovy downtown combo released its first single, a slow, churning apocalypse of a song called "Screenwriter's Blues," which showcased the metaphor-crazed mind and Jack Webb-in-leather-pants voice of M. Doughty, the band's bard. Their album "Ruby Vroom" turned out to be one of the best records of 1994: an impressive slab of



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tiny, insinuating melodies and skittering acid-jazz grooves overrun with obscure sound bites, phone conversations, Howlin' Wolf samples, and more puzzling allusions than the "Cantos" of Ezra Pound. With **LOW.** Sept. 16: **BJÖRN AGAIN,** an ABBA tribute band. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

LIMELIGHT, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—A church turned eighties hot spot, this unholy venue currently plays host to a variety of techno and alternative acts. Wednesday night is Disco 2000.

MATCH, 160 Mercer St. (343-0020)—This tragically hip SoHo *boîte* is the place to be every Sunday night, thanks to the **SHORTY JACKSON LEGACY BLUES BAND.** Dining.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—Sept. 14: Tuscadero. Sept. 16: **THROWING MUSES.** Former member Tanya Donelly may get all the attention for her own group, Belly, but the Muses' gripping new record, "University," far surpasses those of Belly and of most other alternative-rock poster children in potency and inventiveness. Led for more than ten tumultuous years by the pixieish singer Kristin Hersh (who says that her songwriting is guided by voices in her head), the Muses shift between guitar mayhem and swirling, otherworldly realms. Sept. 17: **JUNIOR BROWN.** An Indiana cowboy with a flair for songs about heartbreak, hillbillies, and fools, Brown is something of a country-and-Western throwback, a basso-profundo crooner with a salty, poker-faced delivery. He has a sense of humor, too: his guitar-propelled material is populated with state troopers and hula girls. But his fearsome-looking "guit steel"—a cross between a Fender Bullet and an old lap steel guitar—is what has made his reputation. He's probably the only guitarist who can switch from rapid-fire chicken pickin' to delicate slide work in the course of a single bar.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Sept. 16: **CHAVEZ,** a kind of indie-rock supergroup, featuring former members of Live Skull and Bullet LaVolta. "Gone Glimmering," the band's very cool début on the very cool Matador Records, is one of the gems of 1995, but Chavez is best seen live—its canny, artful intensity provides arena-sized bliss.

MONKEY BAR, 60 E. 54th St. (838-2600)—Beyond the monkey murals, there's a bright see-and-be-seen dining arena that's perfect for committing high-profile indiscretions in a strapless gown. But the place to be is the dark and crowded bar up front, by the grand piano, where the bar stools look like stuffed olives. You perch on the pimiento. Dining.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Sept. 13-14: The **ITALS.** Sept. 19: **LENNY WHITE.** Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Sept. 15: The **AVERAGE WHITE BAND.** It's been more than twenty years since this Scottish group released its irresistible "Pick Up the Pieces." No one has done a better job of straddling the fault line between R. & B. and funk. These days, the elastic guitars and whip-cracking horns are still intact. Sept. 16: **BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO.** The ambassador of zydeco music, a Cajun gumbo of accordion-heavy grooves, is a true party professional—seasoned by decades of touring, he knows how to make even the most uptight New York crowd dance. Keep your eye on the washboard player.

WEBSTER HALL, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Sept. 15: **COWBOY MOUTH.**

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Goya in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," which comprises the Met's entire collection of works by the Spanish master—including seventeen paintings and more than three hundred and fifty etchings, lithographs, and drawings—addresses the reattribution of certain works over time. . . . ¶ The museum's collection of large paintings and frescoes by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo has been reinstalled, at the top of the main staircase, above the Great Hall. . . . ¶ The hundred works in "The Renaissance in France: Drawings from the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris" form a survey of superb draftsmanship. Through Nov. 12. . . . ¶ Trenchcoats, epaulets, tartans, aviator glasses, khaki, and many other elements of civilian dress were recruited from the militaries of the world. "Swords Into Ploughshares," in the Costume Institute, offers a hundred outfits and a host of visual links between the wardrobes of the warrior and the leisure classes. Through Nov. 26. . . . ¶ "Pages of Perfection: Islamic Paintings and Calligraphy from the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg." . . . **NOTE:** The museum's roof garden is open, when weather permits, until Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Alfred Stieglitz at Lake George," ninety-three photographs taken at the artist's upstate retreat, most of them from the twenties and thirties. Starts Sept. 14. . . . ¶ "Impressions of Nature" brings together a wide variety of modern landscape prints and paintings. Starts Sept. 16. . . . ¶ Leon Levinstein's street photographs of people in New York neighborhoods from the fifties through the seventies. Through Oct. 12. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Georg Baselitz." A large survey of work by the East German neo-expressionist painter famous for his upside-down figures. Through Sept. 17. . . . ¶ "Josef Albers: Glass, Color, and Light." A beautiful and unusual exhibition of paintings on glass, glass constructions, oil paintings, and photographs. Through Sept. 17. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM SOHO, 575 Broadway—A survey of the conceptual photography of Dieter Appelt, supplemented by sculptural objects made by the artist for inclusion in these images. Through Nov. 5. . . . ¶ Fluorescent light sculptures from 1963 to 1987, by Dan Flavin. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A terrific and illuminating double bill: "Edward Hopper and the American Imagination" (through Oct. 15) and "Florine Stettheimer: Manhattan Fantastica" (through Nov. 5). Hopper's work, with its solitary figures moving like somnambulists through otherwise vacant streets and interiors, embodies a very American vision of urban loneliness transformed by inexplicable moments of transcendence. Stettheimer, by contrast, epitomized, in both her art and her life, the fertile marriage of café society and the avant-garde. Her effervescent paintings record the milieu she cultivated (it was quite a set: Carl Van Vechten, Parker Tyler, Virgil Thomson, and Marcel Duchamp were all among the regulars) in moods of brittle irony and poetic reverie. . . . ¶ "Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art." Through Oct. 1. . . . ¶ "Gazing Back: Shigeko Kubota and Mary Lucier." Kubota, in her video sculptures, reinterprets Duchamp, while Lucier, in her video installation, spins Monet. Through Sept. 24. . . . ¶ Works on paper by Jackson Pollock. Starts Sept. 13. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—A hundred and forty botanical watercolors, illustrations, engravings, and lithographs are on view; a third of them are of orchids. Among the artists represented are Pierre-Joseph Redouté, Margaret Mee, Marilena Pistoia, and Georg Dionys Ehret. . . . ¶ The skeletons of some one hundred saurischian and ornithischian dinosaurs have been cleaned and repositioned, and they're waiting for you. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St.—"European Couples, and Others: Works by Dan Flavin." Fluorescent light sculptures from the late sixties and early seventies. Starts Sept. 14. (Another show of Flavin's work is at the Guggenheim Museum SoHo.). . . ¶ "Atlas," Gerhard Richter's gargantuan, superbly enigmatic collection of (mainly) photographs. Reopens Sept. 14. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"From Jackson to Lincoln: Democracy and Dissent," a helping of Americana—including letters, manuscripts, books, and drawings—from the Gilder Lehrman Collection. The issues of the day may have a familiar ring: race and gender relations, states' rights versus federal authority, Evangelicalism, foreign intervention, and temperance. Starts Sept. 14. . . . ¶ Mostly French works on paper, by such masters as Watteau, Fragonard, David, Ingres, and Hüet, are on display in "Fantasy and Reality: Drawings from the Sunny Crawford von Bülow Collection." Starts Sept. 14. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Writers in Wartime: Looking at World War II," a selection of diaries, letters, first editions, and working proofs by Mann, Auden, Woolf, Hellman, Steinbeck, Kerouac, and others. Through Oct. 7. (Berg Collection. Closed Mondays.) . . . ¶ "What Price Freedom" features twenty objects, from a Jefferson draft of the Declaration of Independence to a student handbill distributed in Tiananmen Square. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.) . . . ¶ The librarians have chosen a hundred and fifty books, ranging from rare editions to dog-eared paperbacks, as the "Books of the Century." (Third Floor Gallery.) (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Joseph DiGiorgio—Large landscapes, done in a modified Pointillist style, of the Oregon coast and rain forest. Starts Sept. 15. Through Oct. 21. (O'Hara, 41 E. 57th St.)

Jean Dubuffet (1901-85)—Boldly colorful paintings from the early eighties that recall earlier works in the artist's *art brut* oeuvre. Through Sept. 30. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Sol LeWitt—Large multicolored gouaches on paper, consisting of many layers of wavy lines. Starts Sept. 14. Through Oct. 21. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

Paul Manes—Impastoed and glazed paintings, some with canvas or newsprint collages, that have bowls as their subject: bowls stacked in columns or cascading everywhere. Through Oct. 7. (Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St.)

Jackson Pollock (1912-56)—Twenty-five newfound works, painted between 1934 and 1951. Through Oct. 28. (McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

"1937—American Abstract Art"—Paintings and painted constructions by the "second wave" of American modernists, several of whom founded the American Abstract Artists group in that year. Included are works by Giorgio Cavallon, Burgoyne Diller, Charles Shaw, John Ferren, and Charles Biederman. Through Oct. 28. (Snyder, 20 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**JOHN BUTTON** and **NANCY HAGIN,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. Starts Sept. 14. . . . **GEORGE CONDO** and **JULIO GONZALEZ,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. Starts Sept. 15. . . . **PAT STEIR,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Starts Sept. 13.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Roger Ackling / Will Mentor—Found pieces of wood with patterns that the artist has burned in with the aid of the sun and a magnifying glass. / Botanical works on paper. Both shows through Oct. 7. (P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway.)

Donald Baechler—Early paintings in the artist's signature cartoonish, sometimes even crude style. Starts Sept. 16. Through Oct. 21. (Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St.)

Jack Featherly—The artist's first New York solo show offers multi-image paintings à la Rosenquist or Rauschenberg, with figures that evoke an idealized home life of the fifties and sixties. Through Oct. 7. (Freire, 580 Broadway.)

Rafael Ferrer—A retrospective of his images of island life in works on paper: portraits, masks, landscapes, maps, pineapple still-lifes, and much more. Through Oct. 18. (Hoffman, 429 West Broadway.)

David Fratkin / Hollis Jeffcoat—In his large, luxuriously painted canvases, Fratkin fractures architectural details and quirky decorative elements, then reassembles them in swirling compositions that are the spiritual stepchildren of Abstract Expressionism. "Leon's Stretchers," a pair of eight-foot-tall semi-lunettes, dazzle the eye with a chaos of shattered themes—broken columns, scrolls, geometric forms—that endlessly couple and recouple in a bizarre urban mandala. In previous shows, Fratkin's palette had an almost sombre purity; now he's let loose

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with colors so vibrant that in places his surfaces resemble masses of melted plastic flowers. / In the Project Space, a group of rich, refined abstractions based on the landscapes of France and New England. Both shows through Sept. 30. (The Painting Center, 52 Greene St.)

Felix Gonzalez-Torres—The artist's new work, "Untitled (Vultures)" (1995), consists of fourteen framed photographs of the birds of prey, singly or in groups, but you wouldn't know it, since they look either abstract or like tiny gray specks in a gray sky. Through Oct. 14. (Rosen, 130 Prince St.)

Kerry James Marshall—"The Garden Project," four figurative paintings, each about ten feet square, dealing with public-housing projects in Chicago that have the word "garden" in their names. Through Oct. 7. (Shainman, 560 Broadway.)

David Rabinowitch—"Box Trough Assemblages" (1963), sculptures made with many sixty-by-forty-inch sheets of metal. Through Oct. 28. (Blum, 99 Wooster St.)

Frank Stella—Steel, aluminum, and bronze wall reliefs from the past two decades. Also on display are hand-colored and collaged screen prints. Through Oct. 7. (Baghoomian, 163 Mercer St.)

Group Show—Four sculptures by three Italian Arte Povera artists and an American minimalist: Luciano Fabro, Mario Merz, Pino Pascali, and Dan Flavin. Starts Sept. 16. Through Oct. 28. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

"Pierced Hearts and True Love: A Century of Drawings for Tattoos"—In addition to hundreds of contemporary drawings and historical flash, this show offers acetate stencils, photographs, tattoo-parlor signs, tools, and paraphernalia. Among the artists represented are Sailor Jerry Collins, Horiyoshi II, Stoney St. Clair, Dainty Dotty, and Charlie Malta. Opens Sept. 16. Through Nov. 11. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**HANNE DARBOVEN,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway. Starts Sept. 16. . . . **CARROLL DUNHAM** and **LARI PITTMAN,** Gorney, 100 Greene St. Starts Sept. 16. . . . **KEITH EDMIER,** Petzel, 26 Wooster St. Starts Sept. 16. . . . **ROBERT HARMS,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. Through Oct. 7. . . . **HOLLY HUGHES,** Arstark, 568 Broadway. Starts Sept. 14. . . . **BILL JENSEN,** Boone, 417 West Broadway. Through Oct. 21. . . . **MATTHEW MC CASLIN,** Klein, 40 Wooster St. Starts Sept. 16. . . . **KIKI SMITH,** Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. Starts Sept. 16. . . . **JACKIE WINSOR,** Cooper, 155 Wooster St. Starts Sept. 15.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—Sept. 14: Paintings by Whistler, O'Keeffe, Hassam, and other Americans. . . . ¶ Sept. 16: Pétrus and Mouton Rothschild (large formats as well as single bottles) from the memorable vintage of 1945 highlight Sotheby's first wine sale of the season, offered jointly with Sherry-Lehmann. . . . ¶ Sept. 18: Chinese paintings. . . . ¶ Sept. 19: Japanese art works. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

William Doyle—Nineteenth- and twentieth-century decorative arts. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. Sept. 13 at 10.)

Metropolitan Antiques—A show of ephemera. (110 W. 19th St. 463-0200. Sept. 16-17.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Dieter Appelt / Edward Weston (1886-1958)—Conceptual self-portraiture, often in the form of several photographs arranged in grids. (A retrospective of Appelt's work is at the Guggenheim Museum SoHo, through Nov. 5.) / A group of rare, vintage prints from the twenties through the early forties, along with several of the photographer's pepper and shell studies. Both shows through Oct. 14. (Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

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IMPORT

"Police Puppets" (1929), by Tina Modotti, at Throckmorton.

Bill Burke—Black-and-white Polaroids, processed on the spot and often damaged by poor conditions, taken during trips to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. Starts Sept. 15. Through Nov. 4. (Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St.)

Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976)—A survey of her long, prolific career, including portraits, figures, landscapes, cityscapes, and flowers. Starts Sept. 15. Through Nov. 4. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St.)

Frank Gohlke—Landscapes shot during the past twenty-three years: grain elevators, snow-blanketed farms, Northeastern river valleys, post-tornado Wichita Falls (Texas), and post-eruption Mt. St. Helens, to name just a few. Through Oct. 14. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St.)

Karl Lagerfeld—Portraits and landscapes by the German fashion designer. Starts Sept. 16. Through Oct. 11. (Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)

Sally Mann—Recent photographs of the artist's family in which the rural Virginia landscape assumes a prominent role. Starts Sept. 14. Through Nov. 4. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

Richard Misrach / Harold Edgerton (1903-90)—In the latest series from his desert explorations, Misrach looks up into the sky and comes away with expansive—sometimes riveting—fields of color. / "Acts of Destruction," the fascinating effects of arrows, bullets, hammers, and explosions on innocent balloons, playing cards, and telephone books. Both shows start Sept. 16 and continue through Oct. 21. (Danziger, 130 Prince St.)

Tina Modotti (1896-1942)—Street photographs, still-lifes with puppets, and other works made in Mexico between 1923 and 1929 which reveal a unique marriage of political consciousness and formalist aesthetics. Starts Sept. 14. Through Nov. 4. (Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St.)

Todd Webb / Andrew Moore—"New York, 1946," vintage prints of scenes in Harlem, on the Third Avenue El platform, in Chinatown, at Coney Island, and on the Lower East Side. / Large-scale works from the series "New York Variations," in which the artist conflates architectural details (from the Public Library, the old City Hall subway station, the ruins of the mental hospital on Roosevelt Island), producing poetic explorations of the city. Both shows through Oct. 15. (Richardson, 560 Broadway.)

"Being There"—The existential aspects of landscape photography as elucidated by curator Vik Muniz. Included are works by Gustave LeGray, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Richard Misrach, Gaylen Gerber, and Frederick Sommer. Through Oct. 7. (Baldacci, 41 E. 57th St.)

"Seeing Things"—Photographs from 1844 to the present, in a show that deals with the concepts of gaze and perception. Among the fifty artists are Lisette Model, August Sander, Edouard Baldus, Diane Arbus, Garry Winogrand, and Eugène Atget. Through Oct. 7. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

"The Magic of Play"—This exploration of goofing off, gaming, and having fun features more than a hundred works by twenty-two photographers, including Danny Lyon, Mary Ellen Mark, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Lewis Carroll, and Ralph Eugene Meatyard. Through Oct. 1. (Main Waiting Room, Grand Central Terminal.)

"10/10/10"—A tenth anniversary show, in which the gallery has asked for works dealing with the number ten from ten of its photographers: JoAnn Verburg, Karl Baden, Leo Rubinfien, James Balog, Susan Rankaitis, Robert Blackmon, Richard Misrach, Aharon Gluska, Michiko Kon, and Lois Guarino. Through Oct. 21. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St.)

"Up/Down: Varied Viewpoints"—The subject from above or below, by Kertész, Coburn, Strand, Abbott, Kuniyoshi, Callahan, and others. Through Nov. 30. (Seagram Building, 375 Park Ave., at 52nd St., fourth floor. Open Mondays; closed Saturdays.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"The Garden of Earthly Delights: Photographs by Edward Weston and Robert Mapplethorpe." Still-lifes, nudes, and portraits, hung side by side in comparative groupings. Starts Sept. 15. Through Nov. 26. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**HANS BELLMER,** Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. Starts Sept. 14. . . . **JIM DOW,** Borden, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 16. . . . **NEIL FOLBERG,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. Through Oct. 20. . . . **ANDREA GENTL,** Rice, 325 W. 11th St. Open Thursdays through Saturdays, 1 to 7, Sundays, 1 to 6; starts Sept. 14. . . . **RICHARD GERE,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Starts Sept. 13. . . . **ALLEN GINSBERG,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. Through Oct. 7. . . . **MARILYN MINTER,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. Through Oct. 8. . . . **ALEXANDER RODCHENKO,** Schickler, 52 E. 76th St. Through Oct. 31. . . . **PENELOPE UMBRICO,** Saul, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 14.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum SoHo, and Dia Center for the Arts.)

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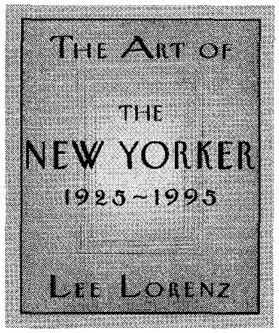

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

NEW YORK CITY OPERA—**RIGOLETTO**. (Sept. 14 at 8.) . . . **MATHIS DER MALER**, by Hindemith. (Sept. 15 at 8.) . . . **TURANDOT**. (Sept. 16 at 1:30.) . . . **DON GIOVANNI**, with a cast that includes sopranos Christine Brewer and Oksana Krovytska. (Sept. 16 at 8.) . . . **LA TRAVIATA**, with soprano Janice Hall as the tubercular one. (Sept. 17 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

AMATO OPERA—Presenting "Tosca." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Sept. 16 at 7:30 and Sept. 17 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

PENDYRUS MALE CHOIR—Wales is famous for its singers. Why such a disproportionate number of the world's opera stars (Gwyneth Jones, Margaret Price, Stuart Burrows, Ryland Davies, Geraint Evans, and Bryn Terfel, to reel off just a few) should hail from a nation the size of New Jersey is anyone's guess. Welsh musical tradition dates back centuries. The mid-tenth-century Laws of Hywel Dda regulated the musical repertoire of bards; two hundred years later, the cleric Giraldus Cambrensis noted (in his "Topographia Hibernica") that the Welsh "do not sing in unison like the people of other lands, but sing in different parts." Welsh choral singing has continued to grow in refinement ever since; in 1825, it got a special boost when it was included for the first time as an event in the eisteddfod (a regional cultural competition), with men's choruses achieving particular distinction. The eighty-three singers of the Pendyrus Male Choir, directed by Glynne Jones, will perform a program that includes traditional numbers and works by contemporary Welsh composers, as well as mainstream choral works by Joseph Parry and others. (Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Fifth Ave. at 55th St. Sept. 14 at 7. Admission by contribution.)

MANHATTAN CHAMBER SINFONIA—The first of the Manhattan School of Music's student orchestras to pull together a program in the new semester, the Sinfonia offers the première of Lawrence Widdoes' "From the Tomb of Abelard and Heloise," as well as Hindemith's 1940 Cello Concerto (featuring Nathaniel Rosen) and Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. Glen Cortese conducts. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Sept. 15 at 8. No tickets necessary. . . . ¶ Armor Hall, Wave Hill, W. 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. Sept. 17 at 2. No charge beyond park admission.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC—Paul Polivnick conducts music by twentieth-century Taiwanese composers Chiang Wien-yeh, Hsu Tsang-houei, Lai Deh-ho (the première of his "Dialect for Violin and Orchestra," featuring violinist Nai-Yuan Hu), Kuo Chih-yuan, and Ma Shui-long (his Concerto for Bamboo Flute and Orchestra, with bamboo flutist Chen Chung-sheng). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Sept. 17 at 8.)

RECITALS

JAZZIFIED CLASSICS—Trumpeter Randy Sandke oversees a concert of his own compositions and arrangements based on classical forms, including his "Symphony for Six" (a four-movement work for jazz sextet), a fugue, and a brass-quintet adaptation of Bach's "Goldberg" Variations (with added variations, for jazz quintet and theremin, by Mr. Sandke). The performing roster comprises Mr. Sandke's Metatonal Band, the American Brass Quintet, and saxophonists Michael Brecker, Ken Peplowski, and Chris Potter. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Sept. 13 at 8.)

MIDDAY LAIS—Countertenor Drew Minter accompanies himself on the harp, trouvère fashion, in renditions of lais from the circa-1230 "Romance of Tristan and Yseut," as well as coeval cantigas by the Portuguese-Galician composer and poet Martin Codax. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Sept. 14 at 1. Admission by contribution.)

RICHARD JACOBOWSKI—Classical guitarist, playing music by Spanish composers, including de Falla, Mompou, and Rodrigo. (Spanish Institute, 684 Park Ave. 628-0420. Sept. 14 at 6.)

BARGEMUSIC—Violinist Todd Phillips plays Bach's Unaccompanied Suite in B Minor; colleagues join him to perform Beethoven's C-Minor String Trio and Brahms's G-Major String Quintet. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Sept. 14 at 7:30 and Sept. 17 at 4.)

MUSIC FOR MABOU MINES—A handful of composers who have created scores for the twenty-five-year-old theatrical ensemble Mabou Mines perform the fruits of their collaborations. The roster includes Philip Glass, Bob Telson, and Herschel Garfein. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. Sept. 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 473-1991.)

NANCY GARNIEZ—Pianist, performing Lennox Berkeley's "Five Short Pieces," Mozart's F-Major Sonata (K. 547a), Brahms's Four Piano Pieces (Op. 119), selections from Schumann's "Albumblätter," and Beethoven's Sonata in A-Flat Major (Op. 110). (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 16 at 5:30.)

LECLAIR PLAYERS—A chamber ensemble, playing trio sonatas by Couperin, Handel, and two Bachs (Johann Sebastian and Carl Philipp Emanuel). (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. Sept. 17 at noon.)

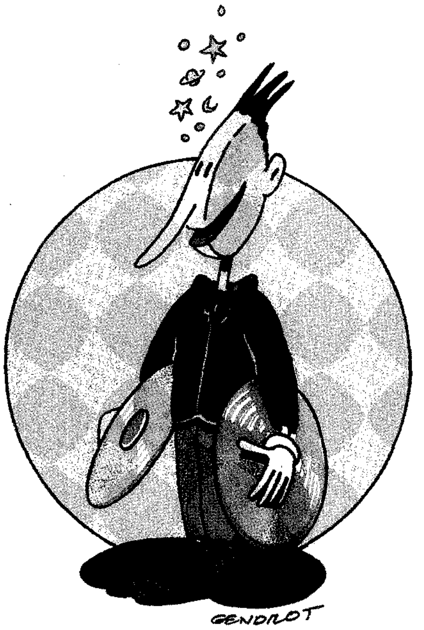
PILLARS OF MODERNITY—Though reticent about the music of others, Bartók generally spoke well of Stravinsky (his junior, by a year); for a brief spell—most notably in "The Wooden Prince"—he even tempered his rhapsodic style with a touch of Stravinskian acerbity. The admiration was not mutual. When asked for a comment following the Hungarian composer's death, Stravinsky offered a blunt eulogy: "I never liked his music anyway." Partisans of the two composers need not mingle at this daylong celebration, though the separate Bartók and Stravinsky segments abut a central roundtable that should interest both factions. The performances are entrusted to three young string quartets (the St. Lawrence, Amernet, and Miami) and two pianists (Christopher O'Riley and Emma Tahmizian). Sept. 17 at noon: Bartók's first three string quartets. . . . ¶ At 2:30: Bartók's last three quartets. . . . ¶ At 5: A symposium on both composers, with cellist Fred Sherry, dance critic Arlene Croce, and composers Lukas Foss and Charles Wuorinen. . . . ¶ At 7:30: Solo-piano, four-hand, and duo-piano settings by Stravinsky: his "Apollo," "Three Movements from Petrouchka," "Agon," and "The Rite of Spring." (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. One ticket provides entry to both afternoon concerts. The symposium is free to those holding tickets to any performance.)

SCOTT ST. JOHN—The Canadian violinist offers sonatas by Mozart (in B-Flat Major, K. 454) and Brahms (his Third), as well as several "Jazzicals" by his accompanist, the pianist Ilan Rechtman. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Sept. 17 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

ROKKASEN—Members of this ensemble play both traditional Japanese instruments and newly invented sound-makers (such as a horn-violin hybrid), and their repertoire ranges just as wide. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Sept. 18 at 8.)

EMMA TAHMIZIAN—The pianist performs works by Chopin, Bartók (his "Out of Doors"), Scarlatti, and Mussorgsky (his "Pictures at an Exhibition"). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Sept. 19 at 2.)

MUSIC BY PAUL BOWLES—He was a local boy—born in Jamaica, Queens, in 1910—but by the late nineteen-twenties Paul Bowles had entered the avant-garde whirlwind of Paris, where Aaron Copland (of Brooklyn), Virgil Thomson (of Kansas City), and Nadia Boulanger (who specialized in educating Americans) anchored his Dadaist leanings with technique. Bowles went on to compose in many genres (including theatrical collaborations with Orson Welles, William Saroyan, and Tennessee Williams) but generally proved most adept in songs, chamber music, and other small-scale works. By 1949, his interests had veered toward literature, which he has continued to produce from his home in Tangier. The Eos Ensemble—a recently formed chamber orchestra conducted by Jonathan Sheffer—will kick off a three-day celebration of Bowles and his circle by performing his song cycle "Secret Words" (newly orchestrated by Mr. Sheffer and featuring baritone Kurt Ollmann), "Pastorela: First Suite," and Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra (with Alan Feinberg and Leslie Stifelman), as well as Stravinsky's Suite No. 2 for Small Orchestra and Copland's "Music for the Theatre." Bowles, who last visited New York in 1969, is expected to attend. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Sept. 19 at 7:30. The festival will continue with a symposium, at the New School, on Sept. 20, and a second concert at Alice Tully Hall, on Sept. 21.)



American Brass Quintet—The ensemble plays quintets by Carter, Brian Fennelly, and Eric Ewazen, among others. Presented by the Washington Square Contemporary Music Society. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Sept. 19 at 8.)

Icelandic Sounds—Tenor Kristján Jóhannsson, Iceland's most prominent classical musician, performs lieder by three Icelandic composers—Eythor Stefánsson, Markús Kristjánsson, and Sigvaldi Kaldalóns—in addition to more standard songs and arias from Italy, where he now lives. His brother, Jóhann Jóhannsson, a folksinging farmer, will offer a selection of Icelandic traditional songs, and their accompanist, Lára Rafnsdóttir, will perform solo-piano compositions by the only Icelandic composer that non-Icelanders are likely to have heard of: the longtime organist of Reykjavík Cathedral, Páll Ísólfsson. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Sept. 19 at 8.)

Queens Chamber Ensemble—The Mexican composer Samuel Zyman and the Quintet of the Americas assist the ensemble in works by Bernstein, Piazzolla, and others. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 19 at 8.)

PAUL GENDROT

ABOVE AND BEYOND

First Drafts—A ticket to the NY Beerfest this weekend, just over the Brooklyn Bridge, entitles the bearer to twenty two-ounce samples, with more than a hundred brews to choose from. Palates that know their ales from their lagers can head for the rarer microbrews and the seasonal specialties; novices can start on the draft beers with weird names (Grail Ale, Drowned Meadow, Dubuque Star Big Muddy Red). Descriptive vocabulary has progressed beyond tastes-great-less-filling: expect to hear mention of grapefruit aroma profiles, biscuity malts, long, gentle, hoppy finishes. Several restaurants will set up shop at the fest, and brewers will recommend brews, sommelier style, to match menus (weiss beers for Chinese food, caramel-flavored bocks for red meat). Shop talk among the brewmasters can get spirited: Garrett Oliver, the man responsible for formulating the beers at Brooklyn Brewery, likes to cite a Sumerian hymn to Ninkasi, the goddess of beer, which turns out to contain a fine recipe for ale. (Brooklyn Bridge esplanade, from the River Café to the Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park. Sept. 16-17, from noon to 5. For advance tickets, which are required, call 307-7171.)

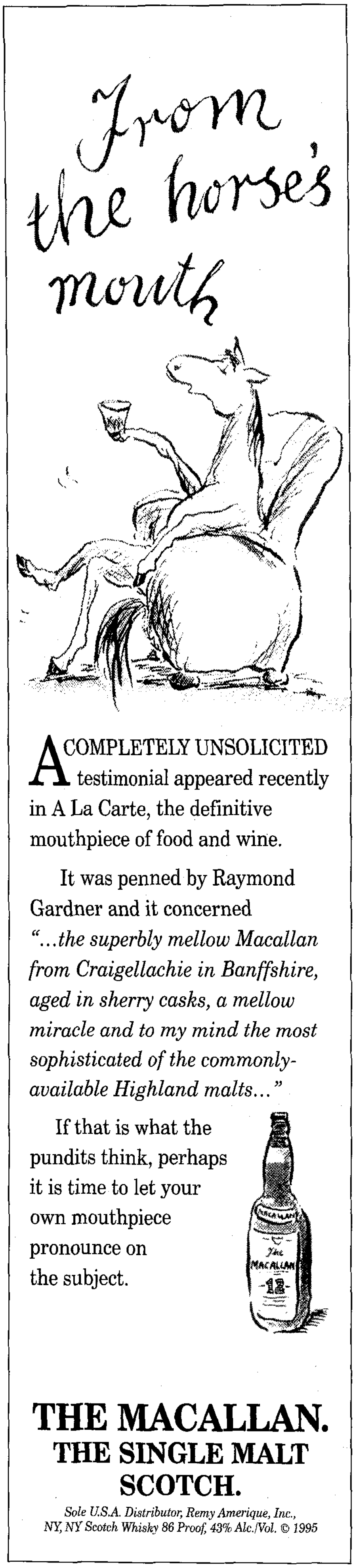
Many Drafts Later—It's bookworm time in the Big Apple, as bibliophiles page through events at this weekend's New York Is Book Country fair. Sept. 15 at 6: Artists from *The New Yorker* gather at Lincoln Center to sign copies of "The Art of *The New Yorker*, 1925-1995." (Kaplan Penthouse. For reservations, call 536-5659.) . . . ¶ Sept. 15 at 6: Stewart Desmond of the New-York Historical Society tracks down literary references (Holden Caulfield's duck pond, the Invisible Man's zoo, et al.) in a walking tour through Central Park. (For more information, call 873-0509.) . . . ¶ Sept. 16 at 2: Ann Douglas reads from her borough biography "Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s." (Abigail Adams Smith Museum, 421 E. 61st St. 838-6878. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the reading.) . . . ¶ Sept. 17, from 11 to 5: Booksellers and small presses set up booths along Fifth Avenue, between 48th and 57th Streets, and on Antiquarian Row (52nd Street, between Madison and Sixth Avenues).

Mortal Kombat—The producers promise, inscrutably, that the live tour, unlike the video game and the movie, "will not contain material of a violent nature." That leaves lasers, special effects, martial-arts scenes of redemptive social value, and—just guessing here—spell check. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Sept. 14-17 at 7, with additional weekend performances.)

Readings—Sept. 14 at 7:30: Architect and essayist Witold Rybczynski reads from "City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World." (Shakespeare & Co., 2259 Broadway, at 81st St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 15 at 4:30: Fran Lebowitz reads from her first children's book, "Mr. Chas and Lisa Sue Meet the Pandas," about apartment-dwelling pandas who long to visit Paris. (120 W. 46th St. For more information, call the ArtsConnection Center at 302-7433.)

Talks—Sept. 14 at 7:30: Authors William Gass, Jayne Anne Phillips, Brent Staples, and Robert Stone discuss the role of violence in American letters. (McGraw-Hill Auditorium, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 49th St. For more information, call 334-1660.) . . . ¶ Sept. 16 at 10: At the symposium "Hives of Sickness," historians and public-health officials gauge the city's response to a succession of epidemic diseases—tuberculosis, polio, AIDS—over the last two centuries. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. To register, call 534-1672, ext. 206.)

Tours—Sept. 13 at 5:30: Roosevelt Islander Eugenie Martin covers her home turf—once known as Welfare Island—as she tours sites of its institutions: poorhouse, insane asylum, smallpox hospital, and penal colony. For more information, call 223-0157.



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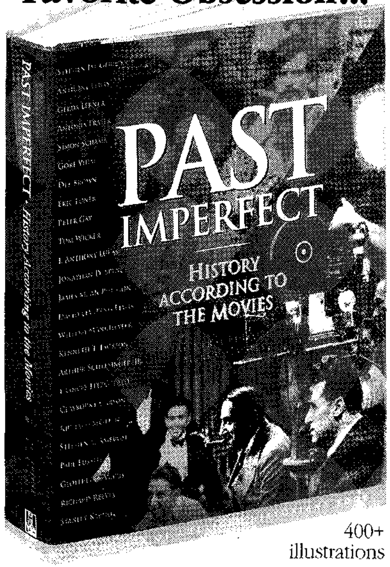
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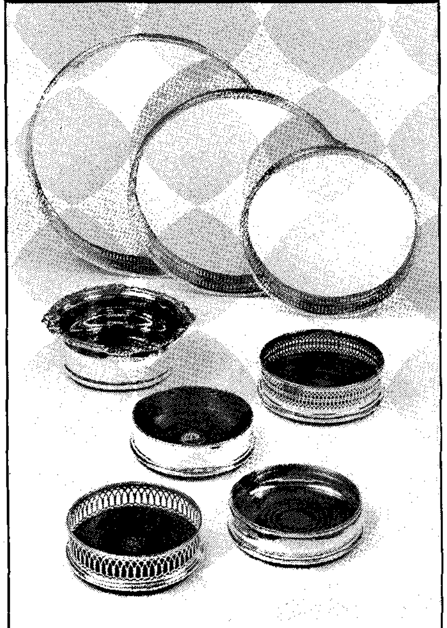

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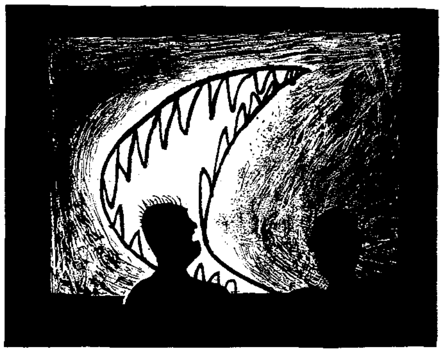

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Angus—The story of a teen-ager (Charles Talbert) who is trying to find out what "normal" is. Directed by Patrick Read Johnson. Opening September 15. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Gotham Cinema, Orpheum VII, and Lincoln Square.)

Clockers—Spike Lee's film version of Richard Price's 1992 novel. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) Opening September 13. (34th Street Showplace, Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

Hackers—Six teen-age computer pranksters battle a white-collar terrorist out to make them take the fall for his crime, in a thriller directed by Iain Softley. Opening September 15. (34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, and Criterion Center.)

Mute Witness—A thriller about a trio of Americans (Marina Sudina, Evan Richards, and Fay Ripley) in Moscow, one of whom—a woman who cannot speak (Sudina)—sees a murder. Written and directed by Anthony Waller. Opening September 15. (Village East Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

No Mercy—A Peruvian version of "Crime and Punishment," set in present-day Lima. Directed by Francisco J. Lombardi. Screenplay by Augusto Cabada. In Spanish. Opening September 13. (Film Forum.)

The Old Lady Who Walked in the Sea—Two aging con artists (Jeanne Moreau and Michel Serrault) in Guadeloupe teach their trade to a handsome young thief (Luc Thuillier), in a comedy of manners directed by Laurent Heynemann. In French. Opening September 15. (Quad Cinema and Angelika 57.)

The Stars Fell on Henrietta—Robert Duvall plays a broke but ambitious oilman prospecting in a small Texas town during the Depression. With Aidan Quinn, Frances Fisher, and Brian Dennehy. Directed by James Keach. Written by Philip Railsback. Opening September 15. (Lincoln Square.)

Unstrung Heroes—In Los Angeles, in 1962, a twelve-year-old boy (Nathan Watt) runs away from his parents (Andie MacDowell and John Turturro) to live with two eccentric uncles (Michael Richards and Maury Chaykin). Diane Keaton directed, from a screenplay by Richard LaGravenese, based on Franz Lidz's 1991 memoir. Opening September 15. (Cinema I and Lincoln Square.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre addresses and phone numbers are listed on page 34.)

Apollo 13—Ron Howard's movie, like the perilous 1970 lunar mission itself, gets home safely only by the skin of its teeth. Dean Cundey's cinematography is drab, James Horner's score is unbearable, and Howard retards the momentum with frequent cutaways to the astronauts' families, who are, unsurprisingly, mighty worried. But the acting—especially by Tom Hanks, Kevin Bacon, and Bill Paxton (as the astronauts) and Ed Harris (as a NASA flight controller)—is sharp and persuasive. And the screenplay, by William Broyles, Jr., and Al Reinert, makes the scientific details both comprehensible and exciting. In the end, this failed mission seems like the most impressive achievement of the entire space program: a triumph not of planning but of inspired improvisation.—T.R. (7/10/95) (Village East Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, Ziegfeld, and Regency.)

Babe—Despite the improbable articulateness of the creatures in Chris Noonan's wonderfully imaginative talking-animal movie, they remain in character as animals: the movie never lets us forget that they don't see the world the same way we do. (The illusion of speech is created with a variety of technical means, including computer-animated mouth movements and, here and there, animatronic stand-ins for the live animal stars.) The title character is a piglet who wants to be a sheep-dog. Babe and his friends—notably, a farm-wise duck and a pair of proud Border collies—act out a comedy of animal manners that is much funnier and much cannier than any recent movie about human relationships: a lovely, stubbornly idiosyncratic fable of aspiration and survival. With James Cromwell and Magda Szubanski. The screenplay, by Noonan and George Miller, is based on a children's novel by Dick King-Smith.—T.R. (9/4/95) (First & 62nd Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Lincoln Square.)

Beyond Rangoon—John Boorman's mysteriously graceful adventure movie is set in Burma in 1988. A depressed American traveller (Patricia Arquette) becomes separated from her tour group and enters the dense, dangerous wilderness of the real Burma, where she falls into the company of political dissidents and winds up running for her life. Boorman's sense of rhythm gives the picture an arrowlike momentum that makes it seem much shorter than its ninety-nine minutes. It's an exciting film and, in the end, an overwhelmingly moving one—a masterpiece. Also with U Aung Ko, Frances McDormand, and Spalding Gray.—T.R. (8/21-28/95) (Village Theatre VII, First & 62nd Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Brian Wilson: *I Just Wasn't Made for These Times*—Don Was's black-and-white documentary is a fascinating portrait of the pop-music wizard Brian Wilson, the prime mover of the Beach Boys. A reclusive and dauntingly odd figure even in the group's sixties heyday, Wilson has acquired, in the years since, the reputation of a brilliant mind gone gaga—a casualty of drugs, depression, and its own unendurable complexity. The fifty-two-year-old man we see here still looks a little shaky, but he's holding himself together well enough to make some terrific music; in the movie's terms, that's all that matters. A recording session in which Wilson belts out glorious new versions of a few of his best songs gives the picture its satisfying shape. He plays them with unaccountable fervor: he seems to be opening his heart. The cast of talking-heads commentators includes Wilson's mother, his daughters (Wendy and Carnie, of Wilson Phillips), his brother (and fellow Beach Boy) Carl, and an eclectic bunch of admiring musicians.—T.R. (9/4/95) (Quad Cinema.)

The Brothers McMullen—Repressed-Catholic-coming-of-age stories have formed the basis of dozens of memoirs and novels and films, so there must be some other reason that this old-fashioned picture about three Irish-American brothers on Long Island and their fumbled dealings with women has struck such a nerve—perhaps because it's one of the rare romantic comedies aimed primarily at the fantasies of straight men. The movie was written and directed by the twenty-seven-year-old Edward Burns, who also co-stars as the cynical middle brother. His character gets a lot of mileage early on out of mean-spirited locker-room humor about his fear of commitment; his conversion to true love at the end is, by comparison, perfunctory and unconvincing.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Dangerous Minds—LouAnne Johnson (Michelle Pfeiffer), a divorced ex-Marine, teaches English in an urban high school, and her students are an unruly, education-resistant bunch—that is, a typical supporting cast for the heroic-teacher genre. Thanks to Pfeiffer's inventive acting, John N. Smith's movie does a fairly entertaining job of capturing the unscrupulous, guerrilla-like cunning of a good teacher in a bad school. But the cut-to-the-enlightenment dramaturgy of Ronald Bass's screenplay canonizes the heroine needlessly: Pfeiffer looks plenty good without a halo. Also with George Dzundza and Courtney B. Vance. Based on Johnson's memoir, "My Posse Don't Do Homework."—T.R. (8/21-28/95) (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema I, Orpheum VII, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Embassy; through Sept. 14.)

Desperado—Director Robert Rodriguez follows up his cult feature "El Mariachi" with a similar story in an identical setting, throws in a big star, and comes up with the same old thing—fun with guns. The plot is not exactly Balzacian in its complexity: we watch the Mariachi kill a large number of unshaven men and go to bed with a smooth-skinned beauty as he moves toward an ultimate and rather tedious act of vengeance. What fun there is derives from the smart editing (Rodriguez did his own cutting, and he's quicker on the draw than most of the pistol-packers) and from Antonio Banderas, who, stepping neatly into the Mariachi's boots, lends irony and calm, and even a trace of sweetness, to a nothing role. Without him the picture would remain a hollow, high-speed exercise in style. (Fans of Quentin Tarantino will note with delight that their idol has a small supporting role. Foes will note with equal delight that he gets shot in the head.)—A.L. (9/11/95) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

The Innocent—Ian McEwan's 1990 novel of love and Cold War intrigue in nineteen-fifties Berlin, adapted for the screen by the author. Starring Anthony Hopkins, Isabella Rossellini, and Campbell Scott. Directed by John Schlesinger. (Village East Cinemas and Cinema II.)

Jeffrey—In adapting his hip, funny 1993 stage hit, Paul Rudnick has lost much of its charm and humor. The story of Jeffrey (Steven Weber), a gay man who decides to become celibate (because the fear of AIDS has taken all the fun out of sex) and then meets Mr. Right, seems dated, and Jeffrey whines so much that you lose patience with him. There are some laughs, and the excellent supporting cast (particularly Patrick Stewart and Nathan Lane) keeps its clever lines afloat. Christopher Ashley directed.—B.D. (Quad Cinema, Chelsea Cinemas, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Kids—Larry Clark's film follows some New York City teen-agers through a day and a night of largely self-destructive activity; these kids seem to be wandering in total darkness. Although the movie will undoubtedly be received as a wake-up call, a sobering report on a lost generation, what's fascinating—and unsettling—about it is Clark's unmistakable admiration for the recklessness of the young. The obsessive, ardent gaze he turns on his subjects as they stumble toward oblivion has a strangely aestheticizing effect; he can't help turning these wasted, aimless kids into icons of the beautiful and damned. Screenplay by Harmony Korine (who was nineteen when he wrote it).—T.R. (7/31/95) (Angelika Film Center, 19th Street East 6, Gemini, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Last of the Dogmen—Tom Berenger plays a bounty hunter who, while on the trail of escaped convicts, stumbles upon a lost tribe of Cheyenne Indians living in the Rocky Mountains; Barbara Hershey co-stars as an anthropologist who helps him research his discovery. Written and directed by Tab Murphy. (Baronet and Lincoln Square.)

Lord of Illusions—Clive Barker's new picture is a good attempt at genre-snatching: he's taken clichés from horror and film noir and welded them together in a supernatural detective movie. The story—about a New York investigator who becomes involved in the black-magic lives of several illusionists and California cultists—rambles along unconvincingly, with a logic that is hazy at best. But Barker's images have the thrilling creepiness of a Nine Inch Nails video. The first half of the film, which includes some gruesome mutilation, is comically suspenseful as the gimp scene in "Pulp Fiction." Unfortunately, at a certain point the supernatural takes over; the ending is just a blast of horror effects.—B.D. (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

Mortal Kombat—This martial-arts film, based on a video game and set to a techno beat, starts out promisingly: the actors look sinewy and primed for action, and the effects (mostly morphing) are convincing. But soon the movie falls flat under an uninspired good-versus-evil plot and pathetically simpleminded dialogue. To be fair, it tries for a tongue-in-cheek punch here and there; thanks to Christopher Lambert (sporting a Catherine Deneuve-like wig in the Obi-Wan Kenobi role), it lands a few. Directed by Paul Anderson.—B.D. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

National Lampoon's Senior Trip—Matt Frewer, Tommy Chong, Valerie Mahaffey, and Kevin McDonald star in Kelly Makin's comedy about a group of high schoolers on a visit to Washington, D.C. Written by Roger Kumble and I. Marlene King. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Gotham Cinema; through Sept. 14.)

The Net—Irwin Winkler's cyber-thriller shuffles morosely from action sequence to action sequence, like a long bus trip with multiple transfers. Sandra Bullock plays a computer whiz who stumbles on evidence of a sinister conspiracy; she's pretty and likable, but this wan chase picture needs a lot more than she can give it. The screenplay, by John Brancato and Michael Ferris, is remarkably free of ingenuity, and therefore of suspense. With Jeremy Northam and Dennis Miller.—T.R. (8/7/95) (Village Theatre VII, Gemini, Orpheum VII, and Lincoln Square. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; through Sept. 14.)

The Postman—Antonio Skármeta's bittersweet 1985 novel, "Burning Patience," upon which this movie is loosely based, told the story of Mario, a lonely postman who delivers mail to Pablo Neruda in Isla Negra, the desolate corner of Chile where the poet spent his final years. In Michael Radford's lovely but sanitized version, the action has been moved two decades earlier to picturesque Italy. As Neruda, the great Philippe Noiret somehow conquers being dubbed in Spanish-accented Italian; as Mario, the late Italian comedian Massimo Troisi is painfully affecting. In Italian.—S.K. (Village East Cinemas, 68th St. Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Promise—Margarethe von Trotta's romantic tragedy follows two lovers (played as youths by Anian Zollner and Meret Becker and as adults by August Zirner and Corinna Harfouch) whose lives are affected by the construction and eventual collapse of the Berlin Wall. Written by the director and Peter Schneider. In German. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Prophecy—The forces of good, in the form of a policeman (Elias Koteas) and a schoolteacher (Virginia Madsen), battle the forces

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Opening September 15, Marina Sudina in "Mute Witness."

of evil (Christopher Walken and Viggo Mortenson) for the soul of a child. Written and directed by Gregory Widen. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza.)

Something to Talk About—An enjoyable but thin pseudo-feminist comedy from a screenplay by Callie Khouri, who wrote "Thelma & Louise." Julia Roberts plays an insecure Southern wife and mother who leaves her husband (Dennis Quaid) when she discovers that he is having an affair. Roberts and Quaid have some funny moments together, and some warm ones. But it's hard to take her problems too seriously: for one thing, she has an overbearing but fabulously rich family on a horse farm to run to for shelter; for another, although she starts out looking tense and wan, by the end she's wearing makeup, curling her hair, and looking so radiant that Quaid realizes he'd be a fool not to woo her back—problem solved. With Robert Duvall and Gena Rowlands as her parents. Directed by Lasse Hallstrom.—S.K. (Village Theatre VII, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Lincoln Square.... ¶ Criterion Center; through Sept. 14.)

Theremin—An Electronic Odyssey—Steven M. Martin's documentary, about the inventor of the first electronic musical instrument, is a strange and moving piece of work. Professor Theremin's creation (played by hand movements in the air surrounding it) was put to popular use in the soundtracks of science-fiction films of the fifties; it also shows up on "Good Vibrations," the Beach Boys hit. The professor's life was full of mystery and intrigue, and the filmmakers unearth some bizarre turns of events. Much of the movie belongs to his protégée, Clara Rockmore, a theremin virtuoso; her recollections give the film its emotional weight, while theremin music enhances its spooky, somewhat hypnotic feel.—B.D. (Cinema Village.)

The Tie That Binds—Daryl Hannah and Keith Carradine play criminals out to reclaim the six-year-old daughter they have given up for adoption, in a thriller written by Michael Auerbach and directed by Wesley Strick. With Vincent Spano and Moira Kelly as the unlucky new parents. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1.)

To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar—Hollywood has long toyed with cross-dressing but hasn't dived head first into the drag scene until now. It may be a surprise to watch Patrick Swayze, Wesley Snipes, and John Leguizamo dress up in glowing silks, but it's nothing more than a surprise, and it doesn't last—the director, Beeban Kidron, has a tough time trying to mold candy floss into a dramatic shape. The bitchy threesome set off on a cross-country trip and pitch camp in a small Midwestern town, where for the rest of the movie they urge the locals to go a little wild. It's a pity that no one worked the same magic on the movie. Everything about it feels so safe, sedentary, and sexless that the leads might as well have worn gray suits. With Stockard Channing wasted as a battered wife.—A.L. (9/11/95) (34th St. East, Coronet, Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and National Twin.)

Unzipped—A witty and fascinating look at the fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi during the months leading up to his fall, 1994, show. Director Douglas Keeve and editor Paula Heredia capture the absurd amount of work that goes into the twenty-minute unveiling of a collection that consists largely of pink and orange fake furs. Mizrahi—warm if occasionally dictatorial—plays to the camera like a natural star. It's nice to see a behind-the-scenes documentary that isn't just out to expose warts. With Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Kate Moss, and other very familiar faces.—S.K. (Village Theatre VII, Tower East, and Lincoln Square.)

The Usual Suspects—A treat. Five criminals, ranging from petty to pro, are herded into a police lineup on suspicion of armed robbery. They walk, but not before joining forces to plan a new crime—a bright idea that soon darkens with treachery and ends in a bulk order of dead bodies. Director Bryan Singer and screenwriter Christopher McQuarrie somehow keep from getting lost in the spiralling plot, a game in which everyone—the good, the bad, and the audience—gets to play sucker. Singer's style may overheat now and then, but his cast, headed by Chazz Palminteri and Kevin Spacey, keeps things cool.—A.L. (8/14/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, New York Twin, and Lincoln Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

BATMAN FOREVER (reviewed in our issue of 7/10/95): Worldwide Cinemas.... **BRAVEHEART** (6/5/95): Embassy.... **BURNT BY THE SUN** (5/8/95): Carnegie Hall Cinemas.... **CASPER:** Worldwide Cinemas.... **CLUELESS:** 34th Street Showplace, Waverly, Guild, and Lincoln Square.... **COUNTRY LIFE:** Angelika 57.... **CRUMB** (5/1/95): Film Forum 3.... **DIE HARD WITH A VENGEANCE** (5/29/95): Worldwide Cinemas.... **DR. JEKYLL AND MS. HYDE:** 23rd St. West Triplex.... **DOUBLE HAPPINESS:** Cinema 3.... **FIRST KNIGHT** (7/17/95): Worldwide Cinemas.... **FORGET PARIS** (5/29/95): Worldwide Cinemas.... **I CAN'T SLEEP:** Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.... **A LITTLE PRINCESS** (5/29/95): Worldwide Cinemas.... **LIVING IN OBLIVION:** Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.... **MAGIC IN THE WATER:** 59th Street East Cinema, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Lincoln Square.... **NADJA:** Angelika Film Center.... **1-900:** Quad Cinema.... **PRIEST** (3/27/95): Worldwide Cinemas.... **THE SHOW:** Criterion Center.... **SMOKE:** Angelika Film Center, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.... **VIRTUOSITY:** Embassy.... **A WALK IN THE CLOUDS:** Beekman, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.... **WATERWORLD** (8/7/95): Village Theatre VII, Plaza, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Criterion Center.... **WINGS OF COURAGE** (4/24/95): Lincoln Square.... **WORLD AND TIME ENOUGH:** Quad Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000).
Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th (477-6600).
Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th (982-0400).
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th (924-3363).
Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th (529-6799).
19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th (260-8000).
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th (689-6548).
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th (532-5544).
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th (683-0255).
Eastside Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 55th (755-3020).
Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th (759-1411).
Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th (759-2262).
Plaza, 42 E. 58th (355-3320).
Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th (935-6420).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th (759-4630).
Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th (355-1663).
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th (753-6022).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd (513-5408).
Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th (832-1670).
Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th (737-2622).
New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th (744-7339).
68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th (734-0302).
Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st (879-1313).
East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th (249-5100).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th (534-1880).
Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th (876-2400).
86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th (249-1144).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110).
Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd (929-8037).
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th (929-3350).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th (255-8800).
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd (513-5402).
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd (989-0060).
Guild, 33 W. 50th (757-2406).
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St., between 8th and 9th Aves. (504-0960).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th (765-7600).
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th (265-2520).
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th (586-1900).
Paris, 4 W. 58th (980-5656).
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th (752-5959).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd (265-7466).
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd (757-2280).
Regency, B'way at 67th (724-3700).
Lincoln Square, B'way at 68th (336-5000).
84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th (877-3600).
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th (222-1200).
Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th (865-8128).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th (354-0900).
Embassy 1, B'way at 46th (302-0494).
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th (730-7262).
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way (869-8340).
National Twin, B'way at 44th (869-0950).

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REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Belle de Jour (1967)—Luis Buñuel was in his late sixties when he made this icy, bracingly unwholesome film about the secret life of an elegant Parisian bourgeoise. Sévérine (Catherine Deneuve), who is frigid with her handsome and considerate husband (Jean Sorel), spends her afternoons as a prostitute in a discreet, upscale brothel. The movie, adapted by Buñuel and Jean-Claude Carrière from a popular novel by Joseph Kessel, is a pristine example of the great filmmaker's serenely outrageous late style. In this picture, desire has a de-luxe blandness that's both mysterious and deeply, unnervingly funny. Also with Michel Piccoli, Geneviève Page, and Pierre Clementi. In French.—T.R. (Village East Cinemas and Paris.)

Come Back, Little Sheba (1952)—As Lola, Shirley Booth is the essence of all those dreamy, slatternly, gabby, sentimental women who move one to pity by their harmlessness and to disgust by their vacuity. As Lola's husband, Doc, Burt Lancaster scores A for effort but just passes on performance. Daniel Mann directed the adaptation (by Ketti Frings) of William Inge's tragicomedy; it's not much of a movie—it's just a setting for Booth, who won the Academy Award for Best Actress.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 15 and 19.)

The Green Pastures (1936)—In this pop-folk fantasy of the Old Testament stories as a Negro child in the South (of an earlier period) might imagine them, Southern idiom, delicious fish fries, and naïve theology are fused with awe and wonder. Marc Connelly's adaptation of Roark Bradford's stories was perhaps the most famous and most popular of Negro stage productions; the screen version (which was also successful) was directed by William Keighley and Connelly, with Rex Ingram as De Lawd, Eddie (Rochester) Anderson, and Oscar Polk.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 14 and 16.)

Mommie Dearest (1981)—The best that can be said about this jumbled scrapbook of Joan Crawford's life from her middle years to the end is that it doesn't seem to get in the way of its star, Faye Dunaway, who gives a startling, ferocious performance. She invests the role with so much power and suffering that the camp horror scenes—the nocturnal rampages—transcend camp. (These destruction orgies were the most talked-about episodes in the book by Crawford's adopted daughter, Christina, on which the movie is based.) Alone and self-mesmerized, Dunaway plays the entire film on emotion. Directed by Frank Perry.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Sept. 15-17.)

Once in a Lifetime (1932)—The playwriting team of George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart created bustling, congested wisecrack-piled-on-wisecrack comedies; their calculated silliness adds more than enough to each situation, and in going beyond your expectations, it can double you up and put you helplessly at the mercy of the next excess. This particular play was considered too rough for Hollywood, but in 1932 Universal brought the enemy within the gates, and, of course, pulled some of its satirical teeth. With moon-faced Jack Oakie as the good-hearted imbecilic vaudevillian who in Hollywood is taken for a genius; Gregory Ratoff as the producer, Herman Glogauer; Aline MacMahon as the sceptical, witty voice coach; Onslow Stevens as the playwright; and ZaSu Pitts as the studio receptionist. Russell Mack directed, from Seton I. Miller's adaptation. The picture isn't particularly well-made, but it's a true period piece—a reminder of the beginnings of a type of Broadway lampoon-comedy, and it has a lovely corny triviality and innocence.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 16.)

At the Museum of Television and Radio, "The World of Hanna-Barbera."

JAIME HERNANDEZ

Trog (1970)—Joan Crawford plays Stella Dallas with an ape instead of a baby girl. Some actors will do anything to be in movies: she probably would have played the ape. An English horror film, directed by Freddie Francis.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Sept. 18.)

A View from the Bridge (1962)—A complicatedly wrong-headed attempt to make a neo-realist Greek tragedy about a longshoreman in Brooklyn who neglects his wife, because he's in love—although he doesn't know it—with his wife's eighteen-year-old niece. Sidney Lumet directed, from Arthur Miller's play; acted by Raf Vallone, Maureen Stapleton, Raymond Pellegrin, Carol Lawrence, and Jean Sorel.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 17.)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1966)—In Mike Nichols' début movie, four actors caught at pivotal moments in their careers play out Edward Albee's pop-Strindberg rendition of death-grip marriages. Richard Burton, in his existential-loathing phase, is George, the passed-over associate professor; Elizabeth Taylor, entering her banshee period, is his wife, Martha, the college president's daughter; and George Segal and Sandy Dennis are the golden-boy biologist and ditzy spouse drawn into their sexual parlor games. Segal develops the comical grimace that would become his trademark, while Dennis goes through what looks and sounds like a G-rated version of Tourette's syndrome. Taylor has funny bits (such as her camp-classic Bette Davis number), but Burton gives the performance of the movie, bringing out the furtive canniness of a man who exposes everyone's limits and can't rise above his own. Unfortunately, Nichols overworks angst at the expense of black comedy. The producer, Ernest Lehman, edited Albee's drama into a screenplay.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 19.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)—Through Sept. 14: "Suspiria" (1977, Dario Argento) and "House of Dark Shadows" (1970, Dan Curtis). . . . ¶ Sept. 15-16: "Mommie Dearest" (†) and "Strait-Jacket" (1964, William Castle), with Joan Crawford. . . . ¶ Sept. 17: "Mommie Dearest" (†) and "Harriet Craig" (1950, Vincent Sherman), with Crawford. . . . ¶ Sept. 18: "Berserk" (1967, Jim O'Connolly), with Crawford, and "Trog" (†). . . . ¶ Sept. 19: Cartoons from the thirties featuring gender-challenging characters.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of films made from Broadway plays. Sept. 14 at 2:30 and Sept. 16 at 1: "The Green Pastures" (†). . . . Sept. 14 at 6: "All the Way Home" (1963, Alex Segal), with Jean Simmons, Robert Preston, and Pat Hingle. . . . Sept. 14 at 8: "A Thousand Clowns" (1965, Fred Coe), with Jason Robards, Jr., Barbara Harris, and Martin Balsam. . . . Sept. 15 at 2:30 and Sept. 16 at 5: "The Dark at the Top of the Stairs" (1960, Delbert Mann), with Preston, Dorothy McGuire, and Angela Lansbury. . . . Sept. 15 at 6 and Sept. 19 at 2:30: "Come Back, Little Sheba" (†). . . . Sept. 15 at 8 and Sept. 18 at 2:30: "The Rose Tattoo" (1955, Daniel Mann), with Anna Magnani and Burt Lancaster. . . . Sept. 16 at 3: "Once in a Lifetime" (†). . . . Sept. 17 at 1: "Long Day's Journey Into Night" (1962, Sidney Lumet), with Katharine Hepburn, Ralph Richardson, Robards, and Dean Stockwell. . . . Sept. 17 at 5: "A View from the Bridge" (†). . . . Sept. 18 at 6: "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1951, Elia Kazan), with Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando, Karl Malden, and Kim Hunter. . . . Sept. 19 at 6: "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" (†).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—A program of films from Argentina; all the films are in Spanish, with English subtitles. Sept. 13 at 2 and 6 and Sept. 14 at 4: "The Tombs" (1990, Javier Torre). . . . Sept. 13 at 4 and 8 and Sept. 14 at 2 and 6: "It's Always Difficult to Go Home" (1992, Luis Jorge Polaco). . . . Sept. 14 at 8 and Sept. 16 at 8:30: "The Dark Side of the Heart" (1993, Eliseo Subiela). . . . Sept. 15 at 2 and 6:15 and Sept. 16 at 6:5: "Killing Grandpa" (1993, César D'Angiolillo). . . . Sept. 15 at 4:15 and 9 and Sept. 17 at 8:45: "Funes, a Great Love" (1993, Raul de la Torre). . . . Sept. 16 at 4 and Sept. 17 at 6:30: "Cortazar" (1994, Tristan Bauer). . . . Sept. 17 at 4: "La Tregua" (1974, Sergio Renan). . . . Sept. 18 at 2 and 6:15 and Sept. 19 at 4:15: "The Gaucho War" (1942, Lucas Demare). . . . Sept. 18 at 4 and 8:10 and Sept. 19 at 2: "God Will Reward You" (1948, Luis César Amadori). . . . Sept. 19 at 6:15 and 8:30: "Count to Ten" (1984, Oscar Barney Finn). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Sept. 16-17 at 2: "Charlie Chan at the Circus" (1936, Harry Lachman), with Warner Oland and Keye Luke.

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Television shows by the team of William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. Through Sept. 24: "Top Cat," "Ricochet Rabbit," and "World Premiere Toons."

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Films directed by Spike Lee. Sept. 16 at 2: A discussion with Lee and Donald Bogle. . . . Sept. 16 at 4:30: "Do the Right Thing" (1989). . . . Sept. 17 at 2: "Crooklyn" (1994). . . . Sept. 17 at 5:30: "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads" (1983) and "The Answer" (1980).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Sept. 17 at 7, the feature will be "The Belles of St. Trinian's" (1954, Frank Launder), with Alastair Sim.

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Sept. 14-15 at 8, Sept. 16-17 at 8 and 10, and Sept. 18-19 at 8: "The Blue Villa" (1995, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Dimitri de Clercq; in French). . . . ¶ Sept. 16 at 7: Short films by Harry Smith. . . . Sept. 17 at 7: "No. 12: Heaven and Earth Magic" (1950-61, Smith).

Symphony Space, B'way at 95th St. (864-5400)—Sept. 19 at 7: Short silent films (with French or English intertitles), by Louis and Auguste Lumière and George Méliès. . . . ¶ Sept. 19 at 8:45: "L'Inhumaine" (1923, Marcel L'Herbier; silent, with French intertitles).

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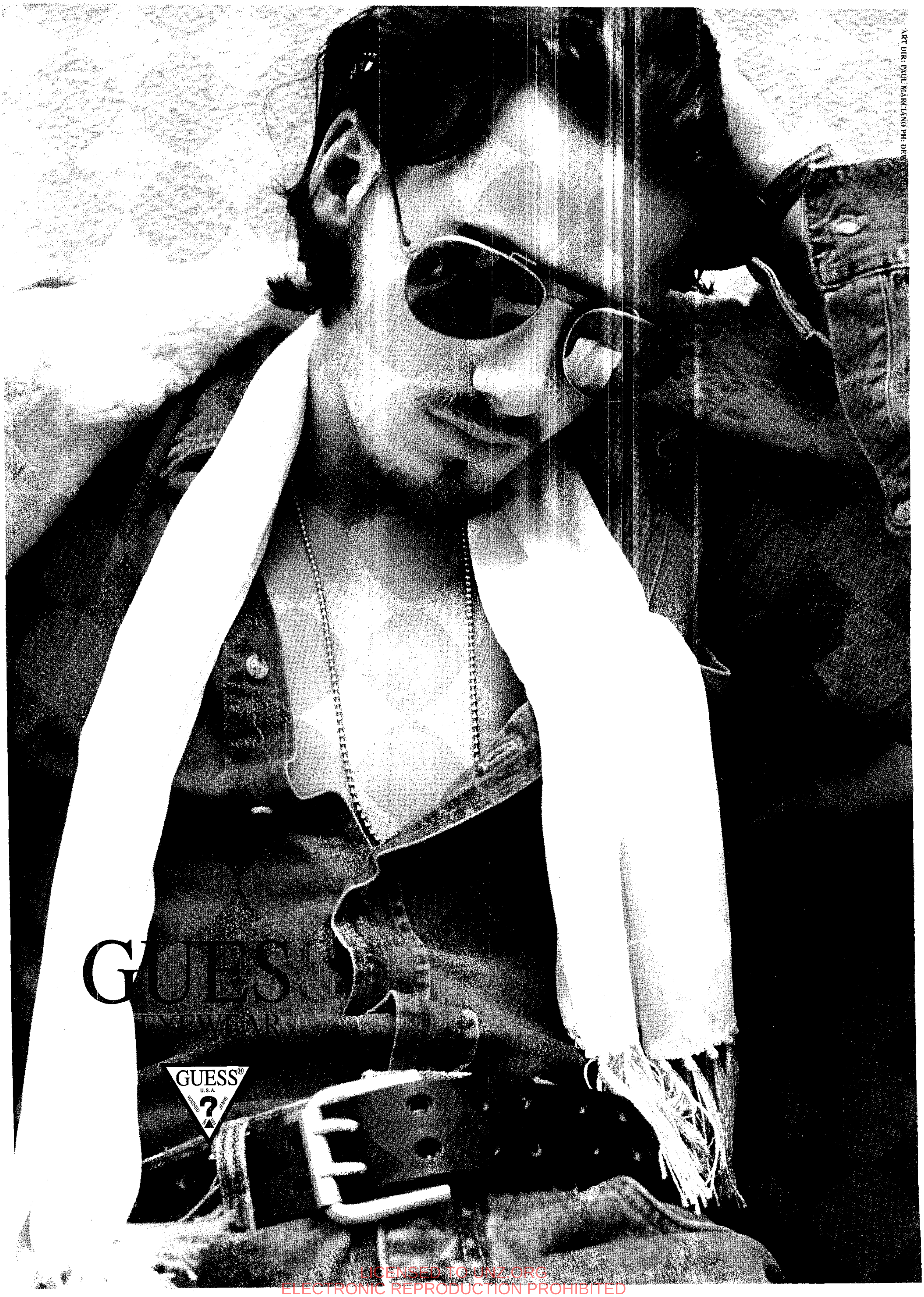
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THE NEW YORKER

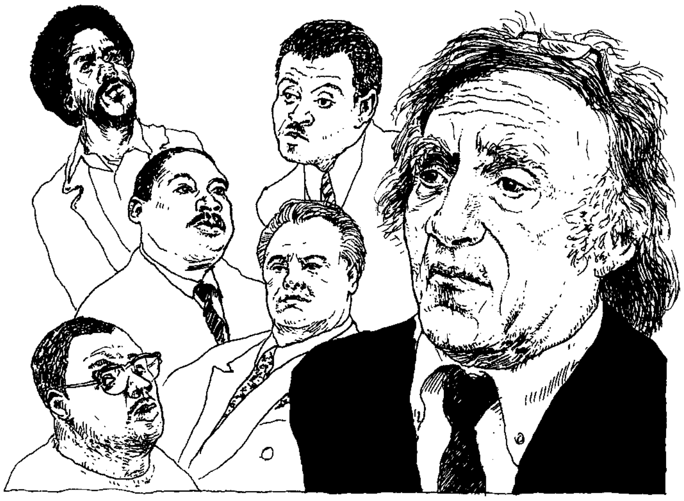
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE DEATH OF A REVOLUTIONARY

By last Tuesday, the Greenwich Village brownstone that served as home and office to the attorney and provocateur William Kunstler, who died of heart failure the day before, at seventy-six, had already been converted into a shrine. The stoop was lined with candles and flowers; a cardboard sign reading "Tompkins Square Squatters Salute You, Our Comrade William" leaned against the wrought-iron balustrade; and a reporter and a photographer from the *Post* sat across the street forlornly hoping that some grizzled lion of the left, or former Black Panther Minister of Something or Other, would saunter up to pay his respects. The traffic was light.

Inside, Kunstler's office was an impenetrable warren of books, papers, sprung couches, and bric-a-brac, all bathed in the perpetual gloom of an English basement. In years past, the office had a slightly foggy air of lassitude suggesting a senior common room, with clients and reporters and friends from the neighborhood lounging around while Kunstler gabbed on the phone or read them his latest sonnet for the *Amsterdam News* or denounced infamous racists from President Lincoln to Bull Connor. Now, without Kunstler's animating, hectoring spirit, the place seemed just dingy.

Ronald Kuby, Kunstler's thirty-nine-year-old partner and sidekick for the last thirteen years, was keeping to his office in the deep, humid fug of the rear parlor. Kuby had never developed Kunstler's knack of getting worked up without breaking a sweat, and he now had a blue bath towel near him, which he used to wipe away both perspiration and tears. Kuby talked about Kunstler's "generosity of spirit" and his old-fashioned erudition and a book of love poems he'd published as a Yale undergraduate. "He leaves a huge space," Kuby said, and then paused, sighed, and rubbed the towel over his broad, red face.



William Kunstler, with former clients (clockwise from top left) Bobby Seale, Colin Ferguson, John Gotti, Larry Davis, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JARRETT HUDDLESTON

The space he wanted to talk about most was the professional one. Over the incessant jingle of the telephone, he said, "I think generations to come will recognize that Bill actually exercised a tremendous influence on what it means to be a lawyer—breaking out of the genteel advocate who holds his nose and represents a client. Bill said, 'To hell with that—I only represent people I love.' He embraced people, legally and physically, in the courtroom." But there was something promiscuous about Kunstler's embrace, which included the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as Larry Davis, a young black man who was charged with murdering four drug dealers and shooting nine police officers while fleeing capture in a hail of bullets, and John Gotti, the celebrity mobster. "He *liked* John Gotti," Kuby said, hastening to add that Kunstler didn't like what Gotti *did*.

Kunstler may have claimed to like the Dapper Don just to outrage delicate sensibilities: he was the Allen Ginsberg of the bar. The real point—the common thread—of Kunstler's career, Kuby said, is that, even when it came to clients such as Dr. King, "he took up their cause and embraced them when they were pariahs, when they were hated." They were hated, Kunstler believed, because they were black, and because they fought racism—even Davis, whom Kunstler persuaded a jury to see as the target of a conspiracy of murderous cops.

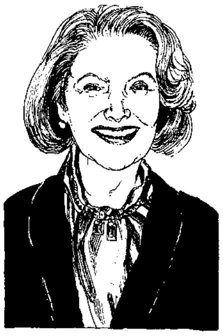
Kunstler's passionate conviction, along with his quick wit and his marvellous gravelly voice, made him a gifted trial lawyer. He was blessed with the happiness and the nonchalant courage that come of living according to one's principles. On the other hand, it was not in Kunstler's nature to subject those principles to much scrutiny. The idea that Davis wasn't responsible for his violent acts because he was black comes close to being a racial insult, and Kunstler himself carried the premise to its reductio ad absurdum when he used the "black rage" defense on behalf of Colin Ferguson, who killed six passengers on a commuter train in 1993.

The trajectory of Kunstler's career is, in part, a testimony to the decline of a viable left in America. In the sixties, his advocacy placed him at the heart of the civil-rights and antiwar movements; in the seventies, he defended Black Panthers and Native American activists; and then, as the politics dissolved altogether, Kunstler was left with the celebrity sociopaths and just plain celebrities. By the end, he wasn't at the action; he *was* the action.

William Kunstler was an immensely charming man with a big heart and a genuine disdain for wealth and power. Those candles and flowers on the stoop of the Village brownstone remind us not only of the passing of the man but also of the disappearance of causes once eminently worth fighting for. Would-be Kunstlers will have to find others.

AN ANGEL MAKES HER ENTRANCE

"MY children called and asked me, 'Why do you have to do this? Why put your name in footlights?' And I said, 'Somebody has to do it, and somehow I'm more qualified than most.' " This is Laura Pels talking, in her début interview with a reporter. In the past few years, Pels has remade herself from the quietly supportive wife of a very rich man into a major, albeit press-shy, benefactress of American theatre. On October 17th, the Roundabout Theatre, one of many companies that Pels has assisted with grants, will open a new performance space, next door to its permanent space, on Broadway at Forty-fifth Street. It will have three hundred and ninety-nine seats—a relatively small number—which means that it will be one of the only Broadway homes for serious but modestly budgeted plays. It will be named the Laura Pels Theatre.


Laura Pels

For her coming out as a philanthropist, Pels is wearing pearls and a conservative dark-blue suit. At an age that she describes as "for me to know and you to guess"—a safe guess would be early sixties—she is discreetly pretty, with bright aquamarine eyes, a neat gray-blond bob, and a slight stoop. You'd never know from her name that she is French; another unexpected fact is that quite a long time ago, back in Paris, when she was in her late teens, she was a professional mime.

"Of course I'm down. I'm thirty-five years old and I've never run a studio."

After a first marriage to a Belgian diplomat brought her to New York, she married a businessman, Donald Pels, in 1965. For more than twenty years, Donald was the head of the Lin Broadcasting Corporation, a TV-station, beeper, and cellular-phone concern. In 1992, two years after a takeover of Lin by McCaw Cellular Communications netted him about two hundred million dollars, the couple divorced. Part of Laura's settlement included the Laura Pels Foundation, a nonprofit trust with assets estimated at more than nine million dollars, through which she issues forty grants a year. The remainder allows her to divide her time between Paris and a deluxe apartment in River House.

IN person, Pels appears shy to the point of unease. She laughs often enough, but a serious turn of mind leads her to talk sombrely about the rhythms of life—its beginnings, endings, and sudden twists. She says she looked forward to enjoying old age with Donald, and confesses to being surprised at the way things have turned out. But, starting about a decade ago, she says, "he thought that instead of being a wife and a mother I was doing other things, and that didn't fit into his plans." Several times in the conversation, she touches on death. She describes her father, a math professor in Bordeaux, who fought in the Second World War and was held in a concentration camp for two years; he came home with a crushed soul and died at the age of forty-two. When she is complimented on her apartment's East River view, she recalls a shock she had a few years ago when she looked out a window and saw a corpse floating by. She talks about her admiration for the play that will open the new Laura Pels Theatre—the American première of Harold Pinter's "Moonlight"—and again her tone is philosophical and her subject is death. "It has to do with death and loneliness," she says. "It's very explicit. Dying is something you do by yourself."

For a millionaire divorcée of recent vintage, Pels also talks a lot about work, something in which she appears to place great faith. Previously, her biggest venture as a philanthropist was in 1991, when she helped Tony Randall launch his National Actors Theatre with a gift of more than a million dollars. That company has run into trouble with the critics, and, though she is too tactful to say so, Pels appears to have realized that she had to do more homework the next time.

Referring to her philanthropic activities, she says, in a voice suddenly much lower, "It is not about getting a ticket to a ball." Her eyes narrow, and you sense that, as October 17th approaches, this, more than anything, is what she would like people to know about Laura Pels.

THE VOICE OF THE V.O.A.

WHEN the Non-Governmental Organizations Forum on Women opened ten days ago outside Beijing, the delegates were isolated from the general population and subjected to harassing surveillance by Chinese officials. The Chinese people were told by their government that this unique gathering near their capital was a bizarre collection of prostitutes, lesbians, and nudists. The government also blacked out First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women. "The main way people in China are learning about the women's conference and the conditions the Chinese have created about this conference is through us," says Geoffrey Cowan, the director of the Voice of America.

The V.O.A., a United States government agency, broadcasts news, informational, and cultural programming in forty-eight languages. Its audience is greater by tens of millions than that of CNN (which, after all, broadcasts only in English). Ever since the Tiananmen Square massacre, it has been the main source of news for the Chinese; about sixty per cent of those with a post-secondary education tune in at least once a week, according to one study. The V.O.A. became the primary alternative for the Chinese after Rupert Murdoch, seeking commercial advantage from the Communist government, removed the BBC World Service news from his Star TV, which beams into China. The V.O.A. broadcasts eleven hours a day in Mandarin, an hour in Cantonese, and two hours in Tibetan. The Dalai Lama has called it "vital medicine" for the Tibetan people.

In a crowd in casually disillusioned Washington, Cowan, who is fifty-three years old, can be easily identified not only by his thatch of gray hair but also by his seemingly inexhaustible enthusiasm. Serving as the V.O.A.'s director is for him a calling with family roots. His father, Louis G. Cowan, was the second V.O.A. director, from 1943 to 1945. "I grew up understanding the role V.O.A. had played in combatting Nazi propaganda," Cowan says. "Dad believed that the way to combat propaganda was through strict adherence to the truth."

Louis Cowan was a pioneer of television as the president of CBS-TV in the late fifties. Geoffrey, until he became the V.O.A. director, in 1994, distinguished himself as a polymath: lawyer, director of the U.C.L.A. Center for Communication Policy, executive producer of the Emmy Award-winning movie "Mark Twain and Me," award-winning author of the radio play "Top Secret: The Battle for the Pentagon Papers," author of "The People v. Clarence Darrow: The Bribery Trial of America's Greatest Lawyer," Corporation for Public Broadcasting board member, human-rights activist, and minor-league-baseball-team owner.

Geoffrey Cowan

SINCE arriving in Washington, Cowan has come to believe that if the United States "wishes to remain a global power, that depends to a great extent on having a presence of ideas and information." The budget for international broadcasting, however, has been cut twenty per cent over the past two years, and the House has voted to slash fifty-four million dollars from President Clinton's request for three hundred and ninety-five million for 1996. The result could mean cutting four hundred personnel from the V.O.A. and eliminating up to twenty languages. "If you had been making this choice five years ago, you would have cut Serbo-Croatian," Cowan says. (In late August, the V.O.A. conducted a refugee hot line in the Krajina region after the Croatian Army offensive. At least three families were actually reunited through it.) "Which twenty languages do you pick? Burmese?"

In fact, the dissident and Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, after being released, on July 10th, from six years of house arrest by the Burmese military regime, granted her first interview to the V.O.A., which, according to a recent study, is regularly listened to by about forty per cent of the population of Myanmar, formerly Burma. (It was because of an interview she had given to the V.O.A. that she was detained in the first place.) Suu Kyi's address to the Conference on Women in Beijing was not mentioned by the Burmese media but was broadcast in her homeland by the V.O.A.

For the women's conference, V.O.A. reporters have been filing stories in fifteen languages, and two commentators have weighed in: Betty Friedan, a founder of the modern feminist movement, and Susan Carpenter McMillan, an anti-abortion activist. An extra hour-and-a-half-long broadcast in Mandarin was added for a live transmission of Hillary Clinton's speech; while the Chinese refused to report on it, the speech was rebroadcast four times by the V.O.A.

"Who cares if reports of human-rights organizations appear in the *Times*?" Cowan says. "It's important that they appear in the country itself. What good is the human-rights movement if there's no V.O.A. to tell them the whole world's watching?"

ROCK-AND-ROLL REVERIES

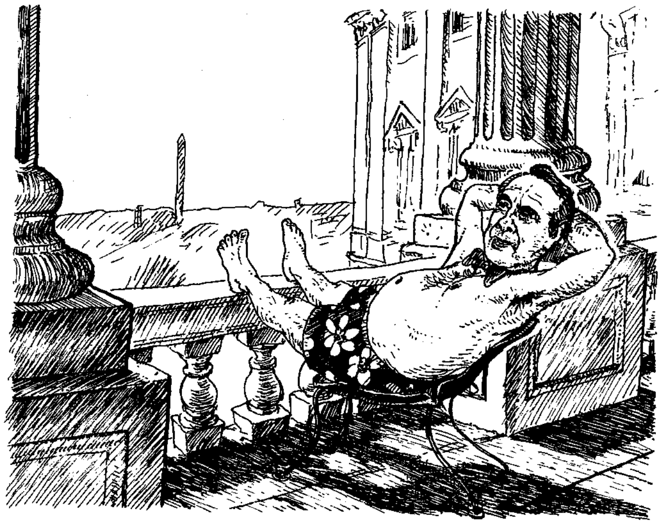
YOU want to know how rocking the opening of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum was? The night before the inaugural concert, the luggage on Flight 577 from New York to Cleveland included a set of conga drums, and at the baggage-claim area there were electric pianos, bass guitars, and cymbals packed in a specially designed, very cute cymbals suitcase. Of course, many of the flights to Cleveland that night carried a handful of rock stars, who can be distinguished from normal people because they always have either at least one extremely unusual body part or bizarre shoes. Some actually have both.

It's really hard to get into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, because from the first day the tickets were selling as fast as tickets for a Pearl Jam concert. And if you wanted an RnRHoF&M snow dome on opening weekend, they had already sold out. Anyway, if you do manage to buy a ticket and enter the museum, you immediately run into another problem: the crowd barely moves, because people get stuck forever in front of the exhibits, which always remind them of something. Visitors get stuck in front of things in museums all the time, but at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum it's an extended jam. Granted, it takes a while to absorb an Edward Hopper painting, but it takes a lot longer to absorb David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust costume, because that reminds you of your freshman year in college and the guy you got involved with when you found out that he, too, was really into Bowie, so even though you and he really had nothing in common you could listen to that album together for hours on end and mistake the experience for a relationship. Not to mention the Neil Young "After the Gold Rush" track list, which you see in the display case and linger in front of while you relive that year in high school when you bought a Martin acoustic guitar against your parents' wishes and then sat upstairs in your bedroom playing "Heart of Gold" to make yourself cry. And we're not going to even attempt to address the Beatles stuff. The point is that you will not fly through, because this sort of museumgoing takes *time*.

On opening day, people were getting stuck all over the place. In front of ZZ Top's Sasquatch fur drum set: "The Top! Remember that album with that cover and those things they were wearing? My ex-wife loved that!" Mannequins of the Supremes, in their sequinned butterfly gowns: "Look at that. They were so beautiful. That's all we played in summer camp—Supremes records. We lip-synched 'Love Child' really well. Bluebird cabin, Camp Cardinal, 1967! You know, I thought there were four Supremes. I only see three here. Maybe they're shipping the fourth later." A photograph of Bo Diddley backstage, cooking chicken. George Clinton's "Atomic Dog" shoes. A letter from Charles Manson to *Rolling Stone*. Keith Moon's 1959 report card. Jim Morrison's Boy Scout badges. Plus there's music pouring out of every corner, so people stall in front of displays and then slowly start to dance in place.

Even James Brown, the Godfather of Soul, got stuck in front of an exhibit. This took place down in the Ahmet M. Ertegun Exhibition Hall, in front of a long glass display case just north of Madonna's pointy-cone bra and just south of Malcolm McLaren's telegram to Sid Vicious's mother regarding Sid's burial. The hardest-working man in show business had been touring the museum with about two dozen of his dearest friends and bodyguards, and he'd been making pretty good time until he reached this one particular case. He liked it so much that he even gave out a soul shriek and tapped the glass for emphasis. It just so happened that James Brown had got stuck in front of the James Brown display, but hey, he's entitled.

THE TAN MAN



Bob Dole

On just about any steamy Washington afternoon, while congressmen and lobbyists dash up and down air-conditioned corridors, Bob Dole sits on the terrace of his Capitol office, his head angled directly toward the sun's rays. "Dole Beach" is what his staff and campaign aides have dubbed their boss's favorite hideaway, and Dole has cheerfully picked up the name himself.

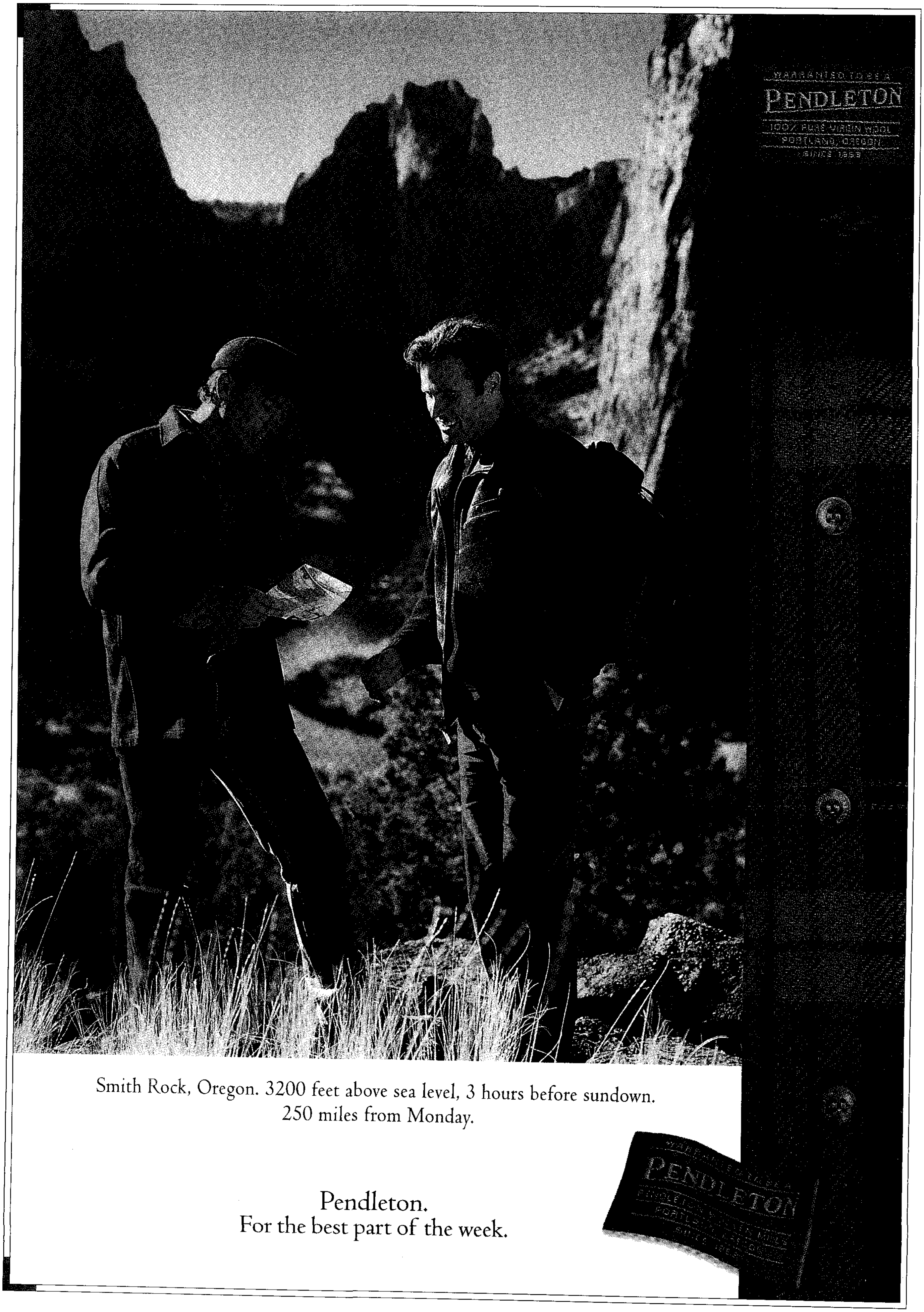
"The Beach is my favorite spot in the Capitol," the Senate Majority Leader said recently. "It's a great place to have meetings, to make phone calls, and to soak up some sunshine."

But Dole's relationship to his terrace goes beyond mere convenience. Everyone who has worked for him knows that sneaking out to catch some sun—he removes the jacket of his sober wool suit but leaves his tie knotted—is a regular, inalterable feature of his daily schedule. "The sun is to Bob Dole what Big Macs are to Clinton," a press secretary explained. Dole spends nearly an hour on the Beach three or four times a week, and the time he's invested has been richly rewarded: he sports a deep, luxurious George Hamilton-style tan, even during the Senate's busiest sessions. (Monthly trips to his Florida condo maintain the tan during the winter.) A staffer describes Dole's color as "vigorous bronze," and indeed he looks positively virile compared with the pasty-faced Speaker of the House. Other perpetually golden Republicans—House Majority Leader Dick Armey and the conservative agitator John Boehner, for example—are described by one Dole partisan as "a couple of pretenders."

Dole is a sun-worshipper of the old school, propping himself under the sun's rays without any protection—no SPF 15, no anxiety about melanoma, no fear of beach-stressed hair. And self-tanning creams are absolutely out of the question. "He would never fake a tan," says a former associate, taking umbrage at the suggestion.

Dole Beach is just ten steps away from the Senate floor, and gets full advantage of the afternoon sun. Dole's political opponents have already seized on the image of a sun-kissed senator languishing on a secluded terrace as evidence that the Republican leader is pampered and out of touch. Paul Begala, President Clinton's sometime consultant, suggests that Dole "should worry about the image of him sunning himself while his budget is going to drive Medicare patients into freezing in the dark"—a remark that one Republican dismissed as simply "whining by a pale Democrat." But other Republicans privately worry. "I think it could be a problem in the campaign," someone observed, "particularly if he starts showing people his tan lines." ♦

"The Death of a Revolutionary," James Traub; "An Angel Makes Her Entrance," Sarah Kerr; "The Voice of the V.O.A.," Sidney Blumenthal; "Rock-and-Roll Reveries," Susan Orlean; "The Tan Man," Ellen Ladowsky.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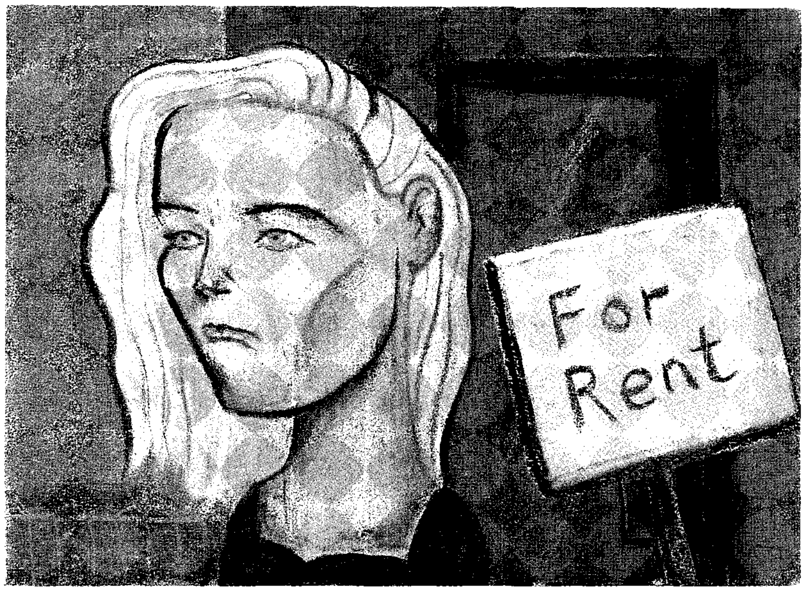
ANNALS OF LAW

DROP-DEAD GORGEOUS

O.J., Nicole, and a Los Angeles real-estate story.

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

"THERE is Brentwood," a real-estate broker in Los Angeles told me recently, "and there is Brentwood." I thought of her words the other day when I visited the condominium, at 875 South Bundy Drive, where Nicole Brown Simpson lived, in 1994, with her two children. It's half of a two-family structure, and I entered the back way, through a garage that opens onto an alley parallel to Bundy. The house is empty now, its ersatz-stucco walls scuff-marked and water-damaged. It has been unoccupied since its owner was murdered, on June 12, 1994, and has been on the market for nearly a year. On a wall near the kitchen you can see a crack, caused by the Northridge earthquake, which occurred on January 17, 1994, two weeks after Nicole moved in. The damage was never repaired.



The Simpsons' divorce resulted in the common financial inequities—and the rancor over cash and property intensified.

AHMET GÖRGÜN

Coming out of the garage, you can still see several reminders of the case that brought this place its macabre renown. A few steps away from where Nicole used to park her Ferrari is the ledge where police found a gooey cup of Ben & Jerry's ice cream on the night she and Ronald Goldman were murdered. A sticky ring of uncertain provenance lingers. No one has changed the kitchen telephone, and its speed-dialler is still headed by "Daddy"—O. J. Simpson. Nicole's bathtub, which police found full and surrounded by burning candles, is now covered with dust. In the passageway along the side of the building, the trail of blood that has so dominated Simpson's trial for the murders has vanished, obliterated by repeated cleanings. In front of the house, facing Bundy, half a dozen potted trees—placed as a futile gesture to discourage curiosity seekers—sit at the foot of the four stairs, the precise spot where Nicole died. The "cage"—the prosecutor Marcia Clark's evocative phrase for the tiny space near the stairs where Goldman was murdered—is unchanged. Trapped by an iron fence on two sides, a large tree on a third, and a killer on the fourth, the young man clearly had nowhere to flee.

Through the Simpson case, the name "Brentwood" has become the symbol of a languorous and glamorous style of Los

Angeles life. Nicole's house was pleasant and expensive, but certainly unremarkable by the standards of the area. Bundy is one of the main thoroughfares in this part of Los Angeles, which is known as the Brentwood Flats, or, sometimes, the poor man's Brentwood. When the front door is open, the screeching of traffic makes normal conversation difficult in the living room. Though there are many windows in the house, not much light comes into the main rooms, which are small and undistinguished. Nicole was apparently comfortable there, but her new home bore little resemblance to the gated mansion where she had lived with her husband, at 360 North Rockingham Avenue, on the other side of Brentwood.

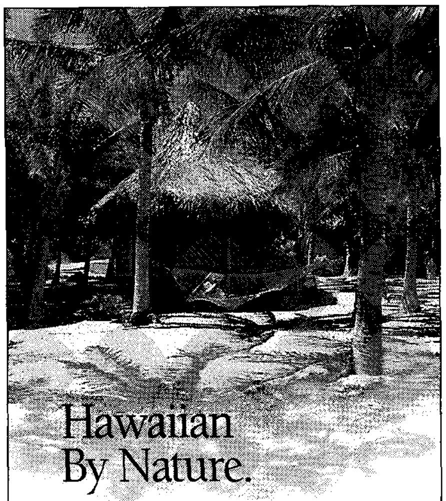
As the Simpson case nears its end, it stands, at one level, as little more than the latest, if the most extravagantly chronicled, of California's many notorious criminal cases—a lineage that stretches from the Menendez brothers back to Charles Manson and on, in deep memory, to Fatty Arbuckle. The focus in the trial has narrowed mainly to the sideshows that arose out of the clash of litigating adversaries: Was evidence collected properly? Were DNA tests reliable? And, most provocative, how did the defendant's race affect the investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department—chiefly by Detective Mark Fuhrman? Almost lost in the tumult has been the central relationship in the case—that between accused and victim, O.J. and Nicole, owner of Rockingham and buyer of Bundy.

The case is, in part, a tale of two houses, and, as such, it stirs profound echoes in the history and culture of Southern California. Like the region itself, formal study of the Southland is relatively new: it was, in essence, invented in 1946, when Carey McWilliams (the editor of *The Nation* from 1955 to 1975) wrote "Southern California Country: An Island on the Land." McWilliams recognized that Southern California as a region was short on the natural attributes, such as harbors and rivers, that had created earlier urban centers. The city of Los Angeles, he noted, was willed into existence by its tenacious founders. McWilliams's chief heir—the leading current historian of the region—is Kevin Starr, a history professor at the University of Southern California, who was recently named California State Librarian by Governor Pete Wilson.

Starr, who is fifty-five and is almost giddily voluble on the subject of Los Angeles, sees a duality at the heart of the city, but not the familiar historical dialectic of labor and capital. His interest is in the psychological processes that have impelled the city's creators to shape its future. "On the one hand, you have the sense of the place as a dream, an invented place, a utopia, a place for which there is no prototype," he told me recently. "And, on the other, you have a place that exalts technology and money, a place that's very much grounded in reality." Starr sees both parts of this equation in all the great themes of the region's history. When the city's oligarchs sought water for growth, Starr believes, they were not simply looking to make money but also seeking to create a new kind of city. Likewise, in Hollywood the movies were not only a business but also, self-consciously, a dream factory. Starr has developed his thesis thus far in three volumes on the region, which take the story from 1850 through the nineteen-twenties.

Chronicles of O.J. and Nicole's relationship have tended to dwell on its more sensational aspects: their meeting when he was a married football star and she a waitress of eighteen; his abusiveness and their many reconciliations; the assertion, by Nicole's ostensible friend Faye Resnick, that they used to have sex five times a day. But their economic relationship may be more revealing. As my visit to Nicole's home illustrated, the divorce resulted in the kinds of financial inequities that are common when the husband has been the sole wage-earner. But, more than that, the rancor between O.J. and Nicole over cash and real estate opens a new perspective on the swift and perhaps sinister end of one couple's Los Angeles dream.

The iron law of real estate in Brentwood is simple: North of Sunset is better than south. "Brentwood was laid out in the nineteen-twenties as an upper-middle-class area for large homes, and it's remained that way ever since," I was told by David Gebhard, a professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara and co-author of an architectural guide to Los Angeles. As Sunset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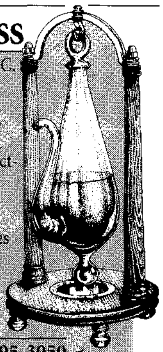
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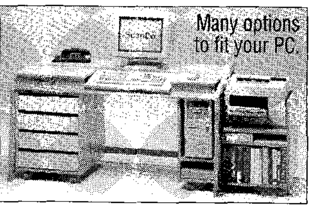
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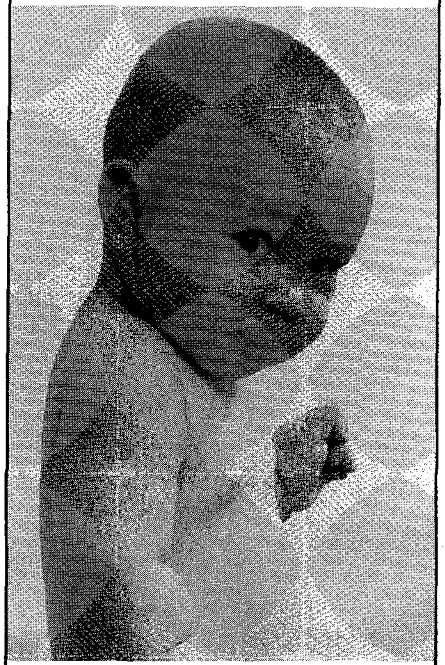

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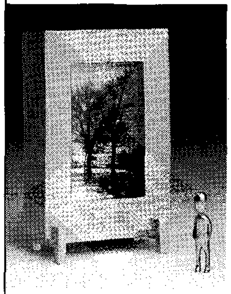

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The heart says: I cannot.
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The window whose frame
Once held dawn
Gleams all night in desolation,
And the one tree

Untouched by blight
Offers a fruit you do not refuse,
An anguish impossible to conceive

Until this lucky day.
Weigh it in your hands, so heavy,
So light: is there more to wish for?

—PHILLIS LEVIN

Boulevard passes through Brentwood, shortly before it ends, at the Pacific Ocean, it shimmies along the base of the foothills that lead up to the Santa Monica Mountains. Many of the most valuable homes in Los Angeles line the twisty streets north of Sunset. "It's like an Olmsted design up there, with meandering streets reflecting the contours of the land," Gebhard continued. In part, the houses reflect the usual stylistic mixture of wealthy Los Angeles: Normandy farmhouse, English Tudor, English Cotswold cottage, Spanish Colonial Revival. "But you don't tend to see many modernist houses up there, the way you would in, say, the Hollywood Hills," he said. "It's always been a fairly traditional area."

On February 23, 1977, while O. J. Simpson was still married to his first wife, Marguerite, he bought the house at 360 North Rockingham, which stands on a prime corner lot, for six hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The home reflects the stolid grandeur of the neighborhood: a six-thousand-square-foot timber-and-stone house, with adjoining pool and tennis court. A tall brick wall protects its privacy. Some of Simpson's expenses, as they are revealed in the papers for his divorce from Nicole, in 1992, give a sense of the scale of the place: $13,488 annually for utilities; $10,129 for gardening; and $4,371 for "Pool–Tennis Court Services." Local real-estate agents have told me that the house would probably fetch close to four million dollars today. About a year after O.J. bought the house, the eighteen-year-old Nicole moved in, and in 1979 he and Marguerite divorced. (Around the time of that divorce, Aaren, the two-year-old daughter of O.J. and Marguerite, drowned in the pool at Rockingham.) Even though Nicole lived at Rockingham for about fourteen years, there was never any doubt that the house was his. Simpson stated in a declaration filed on July 9, 1992, as part of the divorce proceeding, "Because of the nature of my estate and my existing obligations . . . I requested that [Nicole] sign a Prenuptial Agreement. There were substantial negotiations over a period of 7 to 9 months which resulted in a signed agreement essentially providing that all property rights would remain separate."

So when O.J. and Nicole separated, in early 1992, it was Nicole and their two children who moved out. She rented a house nearby, at 325 South Gretna Green Way, which had a pool and a guesthouse. (This house is currently on the market for $995,000.)

The legal papers in the divorce proceeding suggest that O. J. Simpson is a far greater celebrity now than he was before he was charged with murder. In 1992, he was a prosperous man, but his earnings and his fame were apparently waning. According to papers filed by Simpson's attorneys, his estimated net income for 1992 was about seven hundred thousand dollars, down from about a million one hundred thousand in 1991. NBC had cut his pay by a hundred thousand dollars, to three hundred and twenty thousand. He estimated that his endorsement contract with Hertz would bring him five hundred and fifty thousand dollars; but he no longer appeared in the company's television commercials. Simpson had owned two Pioneer Chicken franchises in South Central Los Angeles, one profitable, one not. However, the one that was the moneymaker had been burned to the ground in the riots of 1992, and as a result both outlets had closed. He was a principal investor in eight Honeybaked Ham stores; three had recently closed "as a result of the recession." As for his acting career, Simpson's attorneys wrote, "There are absolutely no movie or television deals on the horizon."

Simpson's business judgment seems to have been erratic. In early 1994, for example, he apparently wanted to start importing wristwatches from Russia to America. When he was seeking advice on the scheme, he included his house guest Kato Kaelin, and, according to his biographer, Marc Eliot, Kaelin said, "Well, comrade, I think they're great, and will probably sell a lot." In the year before the murders, Simpson descended into the faded-celebrity demimonde of motivational speeches (for an arthritis treatment) and exercise videos (for weary business travellers).

But Simpson may have been emboldened by his notoriety. As he awaits a verdict, he has, through intermediaries, asked New York publishers for an advance of several million dollars on a successor volume to his recent best-selling book, "I Want to Tell You." His representatives are also negotiating with the talk-show host Larry King for a pay-per-view interview to be broadcast following the trial; such a program would be likely to generate revenues in the tens of millions of dollars. It appears that no one has yet signed either of these deals. A conviction might give corporate sponsors pause; a hung jury might force Simpson, at his lawyers' behest, to stay silent somewhat longer. But the change is striking. Before the murders, the idea

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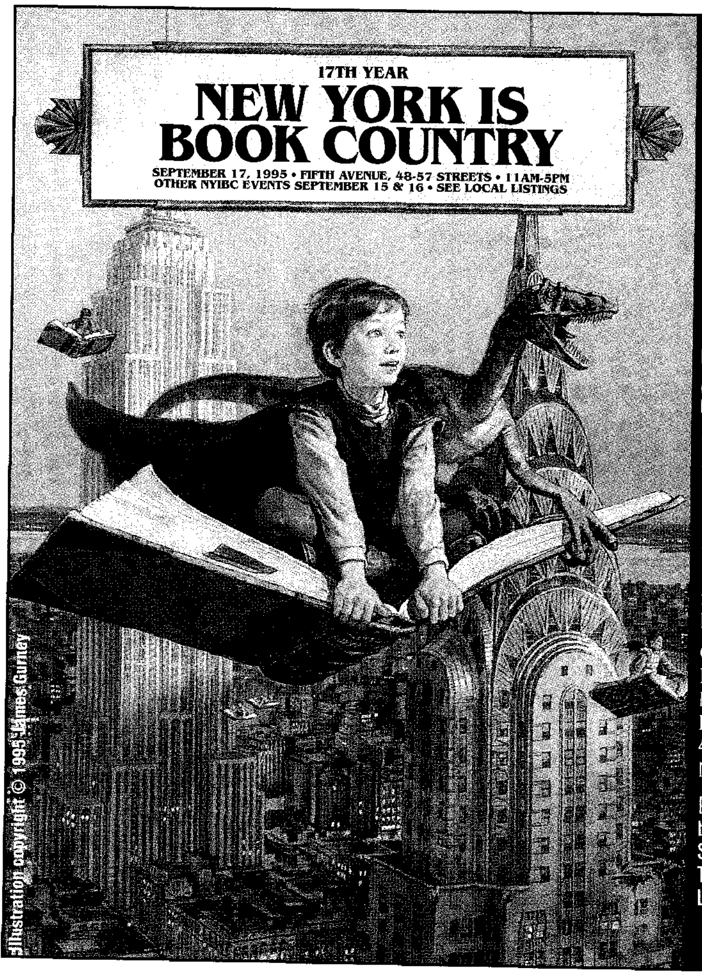

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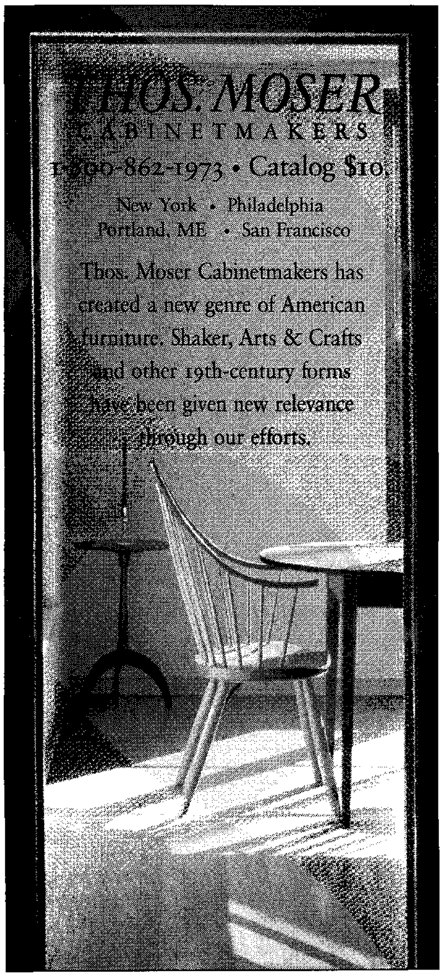
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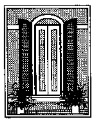
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of a pay-per-view interview with O. J. Simpson would have been laughable; now it is tentatively a hot ticket.

Nicole had long ago made herself a hostage to O.J.'s fortunes. In the divorce proceeding, she emphasized her financial dependence on O.J. as she pressed him about child and spousal support. "I am currently not employed and spend my time caring for my two young children," she declared. Her attorneys wrote in a brief that as a teen-ager, around the time she met Simpson, Nicole "worked as a waitress for two months." Before that, the brief continued, "she worked as a sales clerk in a boutique. She worked there for a total of two weeks and did not make a single sale. These two jobs are the sum total of her employment experience." In a court-ordered meeting with a "vocational counselor," Nicole apparently said her personal goal was "to raise my kids as best I can," and "beyond that I haven't thought about me." She added, "I'm sure I will get a goal someday." Evidently, it wasn't until Nicole was in her mid-thirties, and was divorced, that she began to consider entering the business world. Faye Resnick reports in her book about Nicole that at the time of her death the two women were hoping to open a coffeehouse called "Java Café or something like that," which would offer "poetry readings and fabulous teas and coffees."

The divorce was settled without a trial. On October 15, 1992, the parties agreed that O.J., whose after-tax income by his own estimate amounted to fifty-five thousand dollars a month, would pay Nicole ten thousand dollars a month in child support. Nicole kept title to a rent-producing condominium in San Francisco, and Simpson agreed to a one-time payment to her of $433,750; "it is the intent of the parties," the settlement reads, "that a substantial portion of this sum shall be used by [Nicole] for the acquisition of a residence."

REAL-ESTATE agents in Brentwood often speak about the extraordinary intimacy of their relationships with clients. "People are so wrapped up in their houses here that you become their confessors," an experienced agent told me not long ago. "It's amazing what I hear. People think nothing of telling their broker that they were raped by their father." Nicole Simpson quickly developed a close friendship with an agent named Jeane McKenna. They had much in common: both had been married to and divorced from prominent athletes in Los Angeles. McKenna's ex-husband is Jim Lefebvre, the former Dodger, whom she had met when she was a flight attendant. The two women met in October of 1993, and during that meeting McKenna learned that Nicole had been divorced for about a year and, after a series of partial reconciliations with O.J., was ready to buy a place of her own. (McKenna did not know that within days of their first meeting Nicole made her now famous 911 call from Gretna Green, in which she said, "He's O. J. Simpson. I think you know his record.")

McKenna used to refer to 875 South Bundy, with some exasperation, as her "career listing"—the house that she couldn't sell. A broker in Brentwood since 1978, McKenna had had her name on a "For Sale" sign in front of that property for more than six months when she received a call from Nicole Brown Simpson. "It's not exactly an ace area of Brentwood, south of Sunset," McKenna told me recently. "The windows were double-paned, so you couldn't hear the noise on the street, and when I marketed the property I told potential buyers, including Nicole, 'You're not going to be doing any outdoor entertaining, with all the buses and sirens screaming by.' "

McKenna learned that Nicole needed to move quickly on a purchase: she had sold the rental property in San Francisco, and to avoid taxes on the sale she was required to invest the proceeds in another rent-producing property. "She was paying five thousand a month at Gretna Green, which had a pool and a guesthouse, so when she bought a new place she wasn't going to get everything she had before, but this would be her own," McKenna explains. Nicole liked the Bundy condo, in part because it was near a school. "It was good to be near a playground, since there was no yard at the house," McKenna says. "The deal was for six hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, but Nicole wound up paying about thirty thousand dollars more than that, because she had to pay all the seller's closing costs, too. She just really wanted that place." (Nicole's family is now asking $795,000 for the condo.)

In January of 1994, when Nicole moved to Bundy, her relationship with O.J. was oscillating between reconciliation and a final breach, and the financial tensions between them increased. In Simpson's murder trial, the defense has made much of the fact that the prosecution has produced no evidence that O.J. had physically abused Nicole since 1989. (The jury did learn that O.J. had pleaded no contest to beating Nicole on New Year's Day of that year.) In the last months of Nicole's life, however, O.J. apparently did not hesitate to use money as a weapon.

The first point of conflict revolved around Kato Kaelin. Although the Simpson affair has made the name Kato synonymous with "house guest," his original relationship with Nicole was the more familiar one of tenant with landlord. Kaelin had rented her guesthouse at Gretna Green for five hundred dollars a month—a figure he could reduce somewhat by babysitting for her children—and when she moved to Bundy, Kato was to continue as her tenant, in a small guest suite wedged between the garage and the kitchen. Shortly before the move, however, O.J. told Kato that, although he had had no objection to his living in a separate guesthouse at Gretna Green, he didn't want him living under the same roof as his ex-wife. Under questioning from Marcia Clark at the trial, Kaelin explained O.J.'s objection in his inimitably inarticulate way.

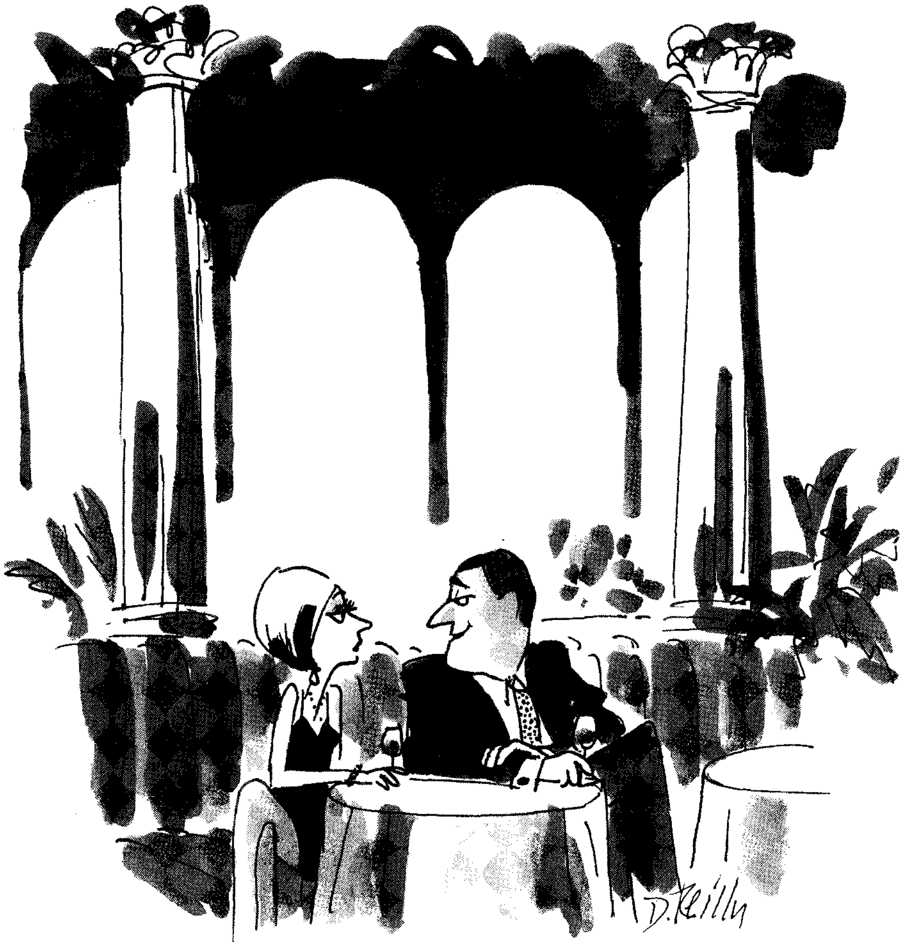
"Did he tell you he was afraid that you were going to have sex with Nicole?" Clark asked.

"No," Kaelin replied.

"What words did he convey?" Clark continued. "Did you get that feeling?"

"Well," Kaelin explained, "I knew that I wasn't, so I—and I never told him—he never asked me if I did, so I never—Nicole and I were friends. There was nothing—there wasn't a sexual relationship. We were friends and I was friends with the children, and that was it."

Simpson's solution was to give Kaelin a rent-free guesthouse at Rocking-



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ham. His actions succeeded in simultaneously removing a potential rival for Nicole's affections and taking money out of his ex-wife's pocket. It also led ultimately, of course, to Kato's prominent place in the history of freeloading. Marcia Clark, who has seen the financial details of her own ongoing divorce case become national news during the trial, drove home the economic point to the jury. She pressed Kaelin, asking, "Did anyone else pay the money you would have paid for rent at Bundy? . . . Do you know whether the defendant paid her four to five hundred a month to make up for the loss of income she would have had from you?" There is no evidence that O.J. made any such payment.

In May of 1994, O.J. and Nicole's final attempt at a reconciliation ended, leading to a financial controversy that dwarfed the dispute over Kato Kaelin. Around Memorial Day, less than six months after she and her children moved into the Bundy condominium, Nicole called Jeane McKenna and said they would have to move out, because O.J. was threatening to report her to the Internal Revenue Service.

When Nicole sold her rental property in San Francisco, she had invested the proceeds in the house on Bundy, but she had apparently told the I.R.S. that the new place was also a rental property. As a result, she avoided paying tax on the initial sale. For tax purposes, she seems to have kept her official residence at Rockingham. Around Memorial Day, O.J. told her that he would no longer permit her to use his address. "He's threatening to tell the I.R.S. that I'm living in Bundy," Nicole told McKenna. As a legal matter, O.J. seems to have had a point, but as McKenna recalls the conversation with Nicole, "I said he's not going to do that. He's not going to make his kids move again. And she said, 'Yes, he is, of course he is—the asshole.' "

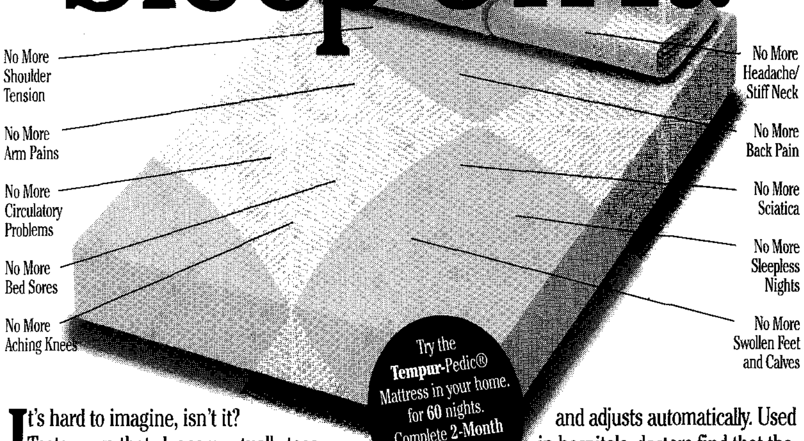
On Monday, June 6th, O.J. put his position in icily official terms, in a typed formal letter to his ex-wife, which began, "Dear Nicole: On advice of legal counsel, and because of the change in our circumstances, I am compelled to put you on written notice that you do not have my permission or authority to use my permanent residence at 360 North Rockingham . . . as your residence or mailing address for any purpose. . . . I cannot take part in any action by you that might intentionally or unintentionally be misleading to the Internal Revenue Service." The prosecution introduced this letter through Nicole's friend Cynthia Shahian, who testified that she saw the letter at Nicole's home on Bundy on the morning of Tuesday, June 7th. In a ferocious sidebar battle in the trial earlier this year, the prosecutor Christopher Darden tried to persuade Judge Lance A. Ito to allow Shahian to testify in detail about Nicole's reaction to the letter, which Darden characterized as "She's angry, she's upset, she's devastated, she's horrified." But Ito excluded that testimony as hearsay. The same day that Shahian saw the letter, June 7th, Nicole apparently telephoned the Sojourn shelter for battered women, in Santa Monica, to report that she was being stalked by O.J. In a ruling before opening statements, Ito likewise excluded the call to Sojourn as hearsay.

On Thursday, June 9th, on Nicole's instructions, McKenna officially put 875 South Bundy up for lease, asking forty-eight hundred dollars a month. "Drop-dead gorgeous 1991 townhome in the heart of Brentwood" was how McKenna described the property in the listing. The following morning, June 10th, Nicole spoke with her friend Ron Hardy, a bartender and a host at a Los Angeles nightspot. "I spoke to her on Friday morning, just before she went out to look at houses," says Hardy, who has been a faithful spectator at O.J.'s trial. "We made dinner plans for Monday night. She was happy. She said everything's great, she hadn't felt this good in a while. She felt that she had finally put O.J. behind her." Nicole and McKenna spent the rest of the day looking for a place for Nicole to rent. "We were together all day, looking at houses," McKenna recalls. "She knew the kids really liked Bundy and wouldn't want to move, so she wanted to do something special for them, to give them something they would want—especially a pool. And by the end of the day we found a place for her in Malibu, a one-story contemporary with a pool and a view of the ocean, for five thousand a month. I remember walking up the hill there with her. We were smoking. Nobody smokes in Brentwood, so we used to sneak it together, and she was saying, like she couldn't really believe it, 'I can really do this. I can lease the house and move. I can really do this.' "

According to McKenna, "Nicole called me on Saturday night, to ask when the sign would go up in front of her condo. She was anxious to have it up, because she wanted to get on with her life but also because she wanted O.J. to see it, to say 'Screw you' to him." As it happened, McKenna was then in the process of switching real-estate agencies, so she couldn't get an appropriate sign until the following evening, June 12th. "On Sunday at seven, a guy from my new office dropped off a sign with me, just as I was leaving for a dinner party. I figured I would put it up at Nicole's afterward. I had the hammer in my car. The party was in Beverly Hills, so as I'm driving home I'm thinking which way I should turn on Bundy. At the time, I lived north on Bundy and she lived south. I remember looking at the clock in my car when I hit the intersection of Barrington and Sunset. It was ten-fifteen. It would have taken me five minutes to get to her house. I said, 'Screw it, I'll do it tomorrow.' " It was at just that time, give or take a few minutes, that Nicole and Goldman were murdered.

NICOLE'S friends find it ironic that she may become, outside of assassinations, the most famous victim in American history. "Tough," "strong," "a pistol," "a piece of work"—these are the words that recur in descriptions of her. "She just never seemed like a victim type," Ron Hardy told me. "She was the mother hen. We went to her with our problems."

But it has become clear just how vulnerable Nicole was—physically, psychologically, and financially. It is equally apparent that O.J. intended to keep her that way. Without a college education or a job to fall back on, she left herself at O.J.'s mercy. Her decline, if not precipitate, now seems to have been inexorable. From Rockingham to Gretna Green, to Bundy, and on to the "one-story contemporary" in Malibu that she saw on the Friday before she died, her houses got more modest and her options narrower. Not even the finality of divorce diminished O.J.'s need to dominate her. Her final lunge for independence was poignant and meagre: a real-estate agent's wooden sign, which O.J. might see as he drove by Bundy. ♦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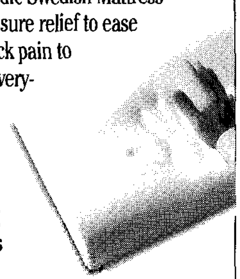

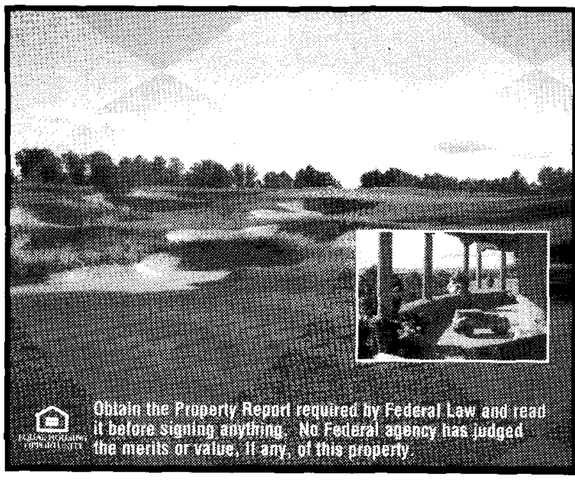
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ANNALS OF CHILDHOOD

WRITING DOWN SECRETS

As the author works with New York children writing their first journal entries, she finds unexpected similarities between their family secrets and her own.

BY SARA MOSLE

ONE morning, in the third-grade class where I taught public school, Shameka was sulking. She had arrived late and empty-handed, in what seemed at first like a defiant mood. "Where's your book bag?" I called from the back of the room. (No book bag meant no books, no pencils, no paper.) She flashed me a bored look, gave an exaggerated shrug, and plopped into her seat. I had more than thirty students in my class and had just got them settled in their morning reading groups when Shameka showed up; I was fenced into a corner by a circle of kids sitting cross-legged on the rug. Then Andrew shouted out, "Hey, Miss Mosle! Shameka's crying!" All heads turned so eyes could look her way. I hated to disrupt the lesson, but what to do? Shameka usually returned such unwelcome attention with a feisty "Shut up!"; her silence made me think her tears weren't trivial. I gave out an impromptu assignment and stepped over the kids' heads to investigate. I crouched down next to her and asked, "Shameka, what's wrong?" But she couldn't, or wouldn't, say. As I tried to coax an answer from her, I kept an eye on the kids in the back of the room. Huey had just punched Frederico in the arm. My class was in danger of unravelling.

I was in my third—and, for now, last—year of teaching public school, in Washington Heights, a predominantly Dominican and African-American community that extends some forty-five blocks from Harlem, which ends at about West 155th Street, to Dyckman Street, near the northern tip of Manhattan. The public schools in the neighborhood have some of the most overcrowded classes in the city, and it wasn't until later that day, when I had a free period, that I had a chance to talk to Shameka alone. (Her name, like the names of the other children mentioned here, has been changed.) I took her to an empty lunchroom, the only private spot I could find in the school. She still couldn't talk, but she began to nod or shake her head in response to my questions; this was progress. I tried to pare down the possible causes of her unhappiness, a method that often worked with my students. (By admitting what the problem wasn't, a kid could often acknowledge what it was.) "Is it something that happened at school?" *No.* "Is it something that someone said?" *No.* "Are you in physical pain?" *No.* "Does it have something to do with your family?" Shameka began to cry again: I was getting close. Finally, I asked, "Do you think you could write to me about what is wrong?" She nodded. I ran and got her some paper and a pencil and left her alone for a few minutes.

When I returned, her head lay on the long linoleum-topped table; she had placed the paper and pencil carefully to one side. A single sentence sloped precariously down the page: "I had I DO not have a home but my sister Best frnded home and sha DO not like me."

Huh? Shameka lived a few blocks away, with her mother and several brothers and sisters; I'd walked her home just a few days before.

With the help of the school's social worker, I decoded the note's meaning. Unbeknownst to Shameka, her family had been evicted from its apartment. Her mother, not wanting to take the kids to a shelter, which she regarded as dangerous, had farmed them out among her friends. She hadn't told Shameka what was happening, because she didn't want to upset her until she had found another place for all of them to live. As I talked to Shameka, I realized that, in the absence of an explanation, her imagination had conjured up a far worse reason for the family's sudden dissolution: she assumed that her mother had died.

I USED to tell my students, "I can't help you unless you tell me what's wrong." But they weren't accustomed to

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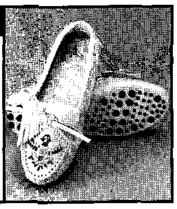

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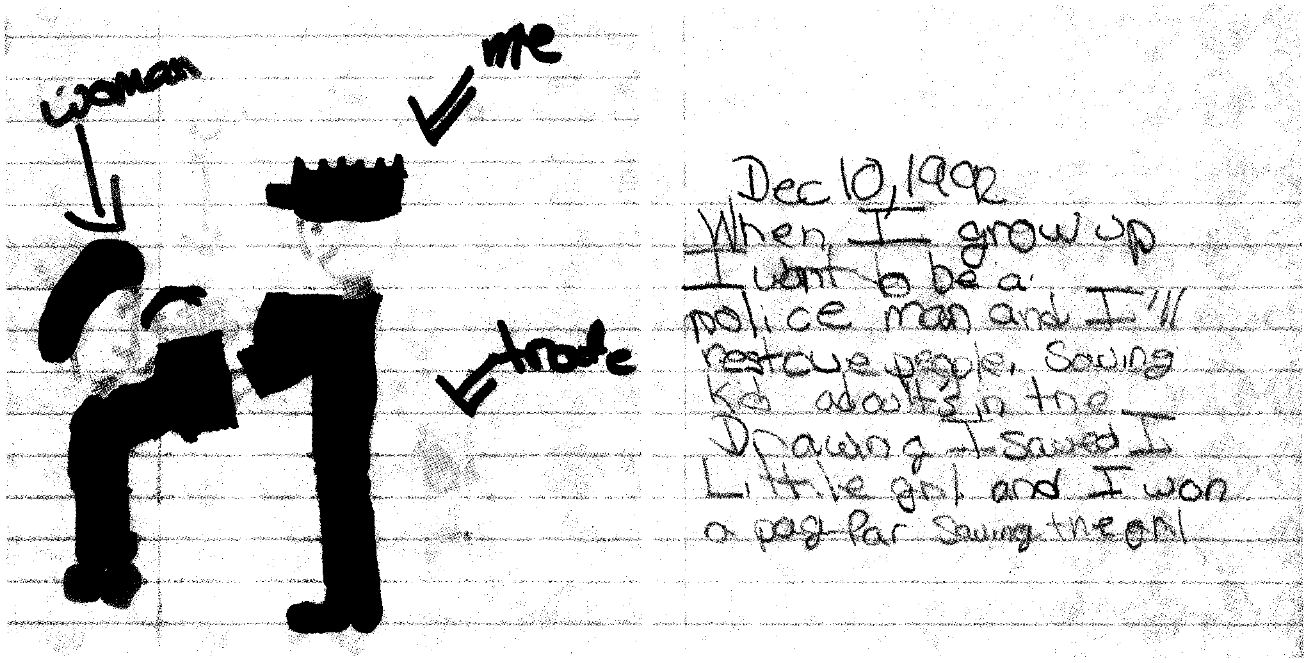
asking for help, because in their lives help wasn't always forthcoming. Lost toys were often lost forever. A pair of prescription glasses broken in a playground pratfall and worth a third of the rent might remain broken for months. One kid in my class wept when a button fell off his shirt. (He owned very few clothes, and this shirt was brand-new.) When I produced a needle and thread and sewed the button back on, he grinned at me as though I'd performed a miracle. I suspected that his mother could have performed the same magic, and I turned the incident into a parable: "See? All you have to do is ask for help." But I knew things weren't always that simple. Unlike adults, who have more perspective on their lives, my students often had little idea that the world could be other than what it was for them.

In fact, Shameka's fear about her mother was perfectly plausible. From 1990 to 1992, Washington Heights had more homicides than any other neighborhood in New York. Partly because of the area's proximity to the George Washington Bridge, it has an active—and deadly—drug trade. Suburbanites cross the bridge to buy marijuana, cocaine, and heroin (the current hot drug among the middle class). I've been approached several times by dealers on the street who seemed to assume that because I'm white I must be in the neighborhood to buy drugs. Despite these problems, the neighborhood has a friendly feel. People congregate and socialize on stoops. Milk jugs with the bottoms knocked out are pinned on fences and fire escapes to form basketball hoops. When one boy was murdered, a crossing guard at the school collected more than a hundred dollars from passers-by, in less than an hour, to help his family pay for the burial. Recently, the area has become something of an artists' community: opera singers, actors, and painters have moved in, attracted by low rents and the bohemian atmosphere. Tens of thousands of Dominican immigrants have also poured into this tiny patch of real estate over the last decade, making the neighborhood one of the most densely populated in the city, and creating tensions between Latinos and African-Americans, who have been there longer. The neighborhood has its share of "welfare mothers," but many of my students' parents worked twelve-hour days, often at more than one job. They were usually lucky if they earned the minimum wage. Some labored in what sounded like sweatshops, and their children often went unsupervised while they worked. (Fifteen thousand people are currently on the waiting list for child-care programs in the area.) Nearly ninety per cent of the kids at the school qualified for free lunches. My students were poor.

Had Shameka not been able to write to me, I might never have discovered what was wrong with her that day. We'd been working on first-person narratives—my students kept daily journals in class. But at first they didn't know how to write about themselves. The skill doesn't necessarily come naturally, as I learned during my first year in the classroom. I would put a topic on the board—"What is your favorite movie?" or "What did you dream last night?"—and my students would invariably groan, "I don't want to write about that!" And who could blame them? Adults don't write in such a void. The purpose of writing—a business letter, a poem, even a bit of graffiti—is to communicate. But in my early, contrived lessons my students weren't writing to anyone.

I asked a friend, Gillian Williams, who was also a first-year teacher, for advice. She told me, "Instead of putting topics on the board, I've started writing back to each kid individually in his or her own notebook." Every morning, students wrote in their journals, and every afternoon, Gillian responded to what they had written with a few lines of her own, asking questions, remarking on their entries, answering questions that her students put to her. The next day, the kids would reply. She had a different dialogue going with each student. She didn't correct spelling or punctuation—she wanted



Dec 10, 1992
When I grow up
I want to be a
police man and I'll
rescue people, Saving
kid adults in the
Drawing I saved I
Little girl and I won
a pag Par Saving the girl

I regarded my own elementary-school teachers as creatures from another planet—ageless and not human. My students, however, seemed to view me as far less mysterious. The journals were what bridged the gap.

R. JIMENEZ

to encourage her students to write freely in this forum, and work on grammar in other lessons. I later learned that this looser method of teaching writing is part of a larger trend in early-childhood education known as "whole language," but Gillian, in the trial-and-error fashion of teachers, had simply devised the approach on her own. I decided to try it in my classroom.

I'VE never been able to keep a journal. When I start one, the entries usually peter out in a matter of days. Once, when I was in the fifth grade, I did keep a diary for several months, but after my older brother found it and teased me about its contents I threw it away. In Dallas, Texas, where I grew up, in the late sixties and early seventies, reticence was a virtue. In those days, the heartland was, in the words of one writer, a "vast non-Freudian America." I learned to read with "Dick and Jane." Rote exercises constituted most of the writing that I did at the public school I attended. The only time I can remember crying in class was when I sat on a tack in the third grade, and I recall the ordeal mainly because of the injustice involved: the teacher unfairly blamed me for the incident.

Another emotion, however, snakes around this memory: unhappiness. Even then, I knew I was crying because of it; the tack had simply provided an alibi for my tears. I seriously doubt whether I could have articulated why I was unhappy then. I don't think it even occurred to me that my unhappiness had a source, although in retrospect it seems obvious: my older sister had died of cancer the year before. The effects of this, however, were so all-encompassing that I thought of her death as simply a fact of life.

I have one sample of my own writing from that period—an account of a trip our family took to Chicago by train over Easter break one year. I was in the third grade—the same age as many of my future students. Here's a typical passage:

> I looked out the window. It was fun. Then I went to the room. We were almost to Chicago. Then we went to the lounge. And we looked out the window. Then I sang. Then I looked out the window. Then we were in Chicago.

And so it goes: then, then, then—up to the top of the John Hancock building, *through the Museum of Science and Industry, and down to the shores of Lake Michigan.* What I recall most vividly about that trip now is the giant Seurat painting at the Art Institute of Chicago; back at the hotel, I tried unsuccessfully to mimic his Pointillist style with crayons. But I didn't have the wit, or the know-how, to write about that. And we certainly didn't discuss the recent death in the family, although I was aware that the trip was our family's first since my sister died, and that we were all trying very hard to have fun. I can no longer recall what I thought about my sister's death then, only that I thought about it a lot. I think that in the isolation of our family's silence I regarded her death somewhat selfishly, as something that had happened to me, and to me alone.

My sister's belongings were stored in a closet in the now spare bedroom of our house. It was a kind of shrine. I used to stand in there and stare at the contents: her jewelry box; her clothing; a large get-well card painted by a family friend who was an artist; her sixth-grade notebook, which still contained her schoolwork and smelled of new plastic. Once, while rummaging through her stuff, I came across a small white vinyl diary with a blue heart on the cover and a tiny silver-and-green padlock that held it shut. I asked my mom if I could read it. She said "No" in a way that communicated anguish. I immediately assumed that she must have read it herself and discovered something upsetting inside. A few years later, when my brother uncovered my diary, he threatened to reveal some childish remarks I had made about being mad at my mom. I threw the diary away rather than risk her finding it. I can still remember what I was thinking: What if *I* died? And my mother read *my* diary? I didn't want to upset her, too.

I BECAME fascinated with my students' journals. As my friend had advised, I encouraged the kids not to worry about spelling or grammar but to get their thoughts down, the way they spoke, in "rough draft." I replied to what they wrote. Although my grammar had been better, they were far more expressive than I had been at their age. And I wondered why. It occurred to me as I read their journals that when I was a kid grownups seldom asked me about my life. Children and adults remained

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strange to one another. I know that I regarded my own elementary-school teachers as creatures from another planet—ageless and not human. My students, however, seemed to view me as far less mysterious. The journals were what bridged the gap. They operated a little like an apartment-house air shaft, providing a common area where we could communicate. Like neighbors leaning out of windows, we exchanged gossip, inquired after family, caught glimpses of one another's lives. They wrote freely, I think, partly because they were also writing to themselves:

> I'm feeling smart today Ms. Mosle yo! and one more thing Ms. Mosle I still want more homework.

They sought advice:

> Ms. Mosle you said you was going to tell me what to do to help my friend because her mother throw's her out of the house.

They took me to task for perceived injustices:

> Why don't you put [me as] the office monetor why did you chang my seat. Just because Marla says that I wana change seats with Colleen doesn't mean that you have to change my seat and your the teacher not Marla or me and anyway I want to go back to the dolphins [table] and my freinds too.

They described events in their lives:

> My firends boyfirend died. And she was sad. I herd in the phone tha she was sad. . . . She lives in New Jersey he was seling drugs for 100 dollars and a man came with 50 dollars and sede if he could take a pack and he sede no. So he had a gun and shot him three times in the chest. then he died. I did not go to the funirow.

When one boy's uncle died, I made the mistake of asking, "Are you sad?" He replied:

> Why would you aske a question like that? You make me feel sader because my uncle is Dead. I'll get over it Don't remind me any more please? I loves him so much.

Because many of my students were recent immigrants, they sometimes had trouble with idiomatic English. (Certain spelling and syntax errors—for instance, their use of double negatives—consistently reminded me that Spanish was their first language.) Before school one day, I noticed Valentino's mother hovering near her son, and I asked him about it in his journal: "I see your mother every morning. Are you and she close?" Valentino took the question literally, and replied:

> Yes becuse sometimes she is cold and I got to grab her a little so she could be a little hot and so she cannot get sick from the wind.

But he went on to answer my question:

> My mother allways tells me if I'm cold and [I] said [just] a little becuse I got a coat. Sometimes my mother where's a jacket cuse she don't have no coat that's why she holds me and my hands too. . . . In winter she holds me real tied [tight] cuse she is cold. Someday she is gonna buy herself a coat so she cannot be cold too much. My mother she gots to hold me cuse she dosen't have a coat. She gonna buy a big hot coat for herself.

Valentino's entries were always these little prose poems, full of repetitions, which crescendoed and then culminated in a sly last line. Once, when I asked him about his weekend plans, he wrote:

> I'm going to rent a tape of supernintendo tomorrow afternoon. I'm going to my cusun's house to ride a bike a little bit and its gonna be fun in my cusin's house plus my other friend too. All of them are gonna play with me in the house supernintendo. It's gonna be fun tomorrow. Tomorrow thier gonna give me $25 doller and Im gonna have $40 dollers tomorrow. I am gonna have a lot of fun. Tomorrow it is my birthday.

I often asked my students about their earliest memories; I had to struggle to recall my own life at their age. I asked Valentino, "Do you remember being a baby? What's the first thing in your life that you remember? How far back does your memory go?" He gave an uncanny description of infancy:

> A long time ago I used to cry alot. . . . I used to do things that is too dangurous. My mother always had to give me milk cause I was always hungry. . . . When I was a baby I used to make a lot of noice and cry real hard cause I wanted milk. I used to jump in the bed a lot too. Sometimes I used to hit somebody by mistake. . . . Sometimes I use glue and knife and stiked it into my nose but my mother took it out. I hide under the furniture and under my mother's bed. . . . I used to take toys and throw it in the floor.

Most of my students had no books at home. (Many of them didn't even own crayons.) One day, Colleen began her journal entry this way:

> This is a spell:
>
> Double, double toil and trouble,
> fire burn and caldron bubble
>
> Eye of newt and toe of frog
> wool of bat and toung of dog
> Adder's for blindworm sting
> Lizzard's legs and owelts wing
> for acharm in powefull trouble
> Ike a hell broth boil and bubble
>
> By Me Colleen Acevedo

She had apparently written out the passage from memory. I asked her in her journal where the spell had come from. The next day, she replied:

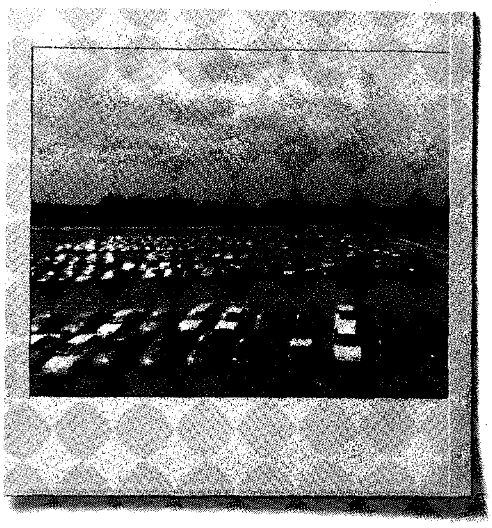
> It is from this dictionary and then is Shakespear is all I know. What is the story of Thy Romeo and Juliat?

I wrote back: "The spell is from Shakespeare. He was a man who wrote plays

Les Moules
96
Victoria Roberts

"You've always stuck to the prix fixe in life."

They came from as far away as Anchorage, Alaska.



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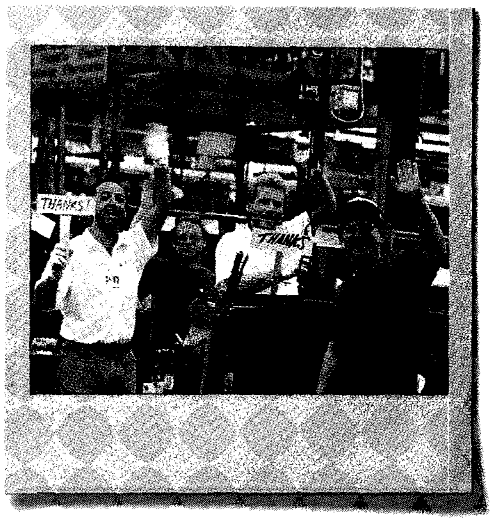
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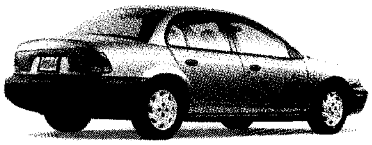

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"I've never been what you'd call an 'ethics head.'"

• •

many years ago. The spell is from a play called 'Macbeth.' It's named for an evil king." This knowledge only excited her further:

> I'm right? he did? Where did the name Macbeth [come from]? I do no[t] know nithing about Romeo and Juliat.

I replied: " 'Romeo and Juliet' is a love story. They love each other, but their parents hate each other and won't let their kids marry. One commits suicide and then so does the other. It's a sad story. Can you tell me a love story?" She responded:

> yes I can.
>
> Well is not exactly a love story is my sister who misses the guy she likes and he live in Dykeman [Street] his is 14 years old and my siser is only 12 but still she never forgets him. One day she asked him that she want to go to the movies but she did not know that [the movie was rated R] but she did not care and she went with him. He was kind. . . . he did not did anything bad to her then when my sister came home my mother gave a rusult to my sister that she is grouned for 2 weeks no phone, no raido, and no going outside.

We had been studying cause and effect in class and had been talking about the "results" of characters' actions. Colleen continued:

> from that day she was sad and she promised my mother tha she will never Do it again that's my sister love story. Did you like the story? Answer yes or no on the bottom
>
> yes or no

I circled "Yes."

Not all my students were as enterprising as Colleen. It's hard to be resourceful without any resources. Cooped up in their tiny apartments, the kids complained most of being bored. Accounts of some weekends read like the movie listings in *TV Guide*. Daniel described his weekend: "On Satuerday I saw two movies about Keratie First it was (The Last Dragon) then it was kickboxer and Sunday I saw Hower the Duck and then Pee Wee Hermen after that I saw teneg mutie ningja trunle and at ten o'clock I saw Houes partys 2." Daniel's parents weren't supervising their son, because they were working twelve-hour days; his mother also attended school. "She is smart," Daniel wrote. "She goes to school she allways pass the Test it is good haveing a mother that knows lots of stoff." But for some parents, particularly working mothers, television was the only available child-care option. Daniel often did the babysitting himself; he was responsible for looking after his bedridden grandmother, a task he actually enjoyed. He explained:

> She is sick that's why I went to her houes but my little brother made it wrost he was jumping all arounded the houes. I'm going to her house until she gets better but with out my little brother. . . . on Thursday I'm going to buy her medison For she could get better and a presnt to cheer her up. We are close but we are closer than that is like glue we are stick.

My students weren't always sweet and nice. Gloria spent several entries impishly describing her skirmishes with her brother: "I hit him in the face so he started to cry." I asked, "Was there any way you could have gotten him to stop hitting you without hitting back?" Gloria replied:

> I hit any way becouse he is a brat. I fight with him a lot becous it get's him mad Pluse I like fighting him it's a lot of fun. . . . he is too much of a crybaby haha. babycryer

I persisted somewhat earnestly: "How would you like to have a sister who hits you? . . . Is there anything that you like to do with your brother?" She wrote back:

> the only relashanship I have withe my brother is rollerskating me and him is good rollershaking but he always crys because me and him always have races and he always loses to much Pluse in the other letter I told you that he is a brat. That little brat.

I had a feeling that I was being baited. I tried a different tactic: "Are you ever bratty? What would your brother say about you if he were writing to me?" Gloria responded:

> Well I am sometimes bratty but at least I don't cry when they take something away from me.

I gave up: "What do you want to be for Halloween?" Gloria wrote:

> I want to be a devil but [my brother] keeps [bugging] me he could be one. So it look like I have to be a angle. But what I realy want to be is a wich and one more thing why did you chang the subject?

She was onto me.

Like the kids of more affluent working families, my students jealously monitored their parents' attention to them. Colleen wrote:

> I hated Sunday because when I went to my mother's work and then when this baby named

> Michael came he got me so jelous tha he climbed on my mother knees. Of course I missed school.

Indeed, the neighborhood where I taught was not so different from far wealthier communities. There were good parents and bad parents. Penelope's mom made up spelling quizzes and offered her daughter incentives to learn:

> I studey words when I already studyed the words my mother then she gives me a test and if I get all 40 words right she gives me $5.00 . . . I studyed foolish-big-large-gocery-detective and many hard words.

Some kids went to work with their parents. Renaldo helped his father on weekends and after school at what sounded like a bodega:

> Today, I worked with my father waching people if there stealing, and opening boxes. being the cashier and giving chang

Denny appreciated his father's cameo one weekend:

> On Saturday I had a basketball game. they blew us out the score was 7-32 My father was there. This is his first time coming to see me he said I can play [well] . . . Saturday I saw the duncking and shotout [contest]. . . . a rookie won they call him baby Jordan! I can't believe that he won because he played agisnst pros.

When one girl's father reneged on his promise to buy her a new coat, she surmised:

> I am a little bit angry with him because he said he was going to buy a new coat and dint he always comes up with a lie story he said he had a headace that was just that he dosen't want to spend money.

And a few kids' parents were dead or in jail. These facts would trickle out over time. One kid, William, had transferred to my class several weeks into the year. He was smart, but he never did his homework, and he often picked on other kids in class. I hadn't had much success in talking to him about his difficulties. I asked him what he had done over his Thanksgiving vacation. He replied:

> I had a nice Thanksgiving. I ate turkey and rice and ham. I played with my friends I went to see home alone!!! I had a nice thanksgiving. I went to see my father in jail. I am happy to see him in thanksgiveing.

Beneath what he wrote he drew a picture of a building with a man standing in a window at the top. I asked, "Is this the picture of the jail? How long has your father been there? . . . Will he be there long? Have you visited him before?" He wrote back:

> Yes I visited him before a long tie ago and he geting fat and big he look nice. I see my bother and my father I saw my bother on thanksgiveing and we had fun we want to see my father in jail.

Sometimes I wasn't sure how to respond. I tried not to be judgmental: "I bet you miss your father. If you could write him a letter, what would you say?" William wrote, "Dear Dad, I LOVE you. I miss you a lot and I wish you could come out of jail today. I love you, me, mom, brother, and sister." I asked William if he wanted to send his father a real letter, and he said yes. He stayed after school one day, and we made it together, out of construction paper, markers, and glue. He brought his father's address to school the next day, and we mailed his creation. From that moment on, William's behavior changed; he started doing his work and stopped picking fights. He often stayed after school to do homework or just hang out in my classroom while I graded papers or prepared the next day's lessons. And William's father had begun to write to him. William sent his father a valentine and described his father's reply in his journal:

> He wrote me a ltter saiding he like it he said to write him alot he said he love me and my mother.

During that last year of teaching, I had one student, Drew, who indicated just before Christmas that his mother was ill. Encouraged by my success with William, I asked him if he wanted to make her a get-well card. He nodded, and stayed after school that same afternoon. Drew was a good artist; he decorated his card with a cut-out Christmas tree and freehand drawings of cartoon characters. In his best handwriting, he wrote: "Dear Mom, I hope you feel better. I miss you lots and lots. I hope to see you soon. xxx ooo love, Drew." Below this letter he sketched a picture of a woman lying in a hospital bed, surrounded by doctors. When I asked him if he wanted to mail it, he gave me a bewildered look and shook his head. I assumed that his mother was at home and that he would take the card to her there. A couple of months later, another teacher revealed that Drew's mother had died two years earlier; she'd been burned to death by drug dealers.

To this day, I'm not sure why Drew fabricated that story, but I know that there can be shame for a kid in having a dead mother. I occasionally lied as a kid about my sister; friends would come over and ask me who the girl was in all the

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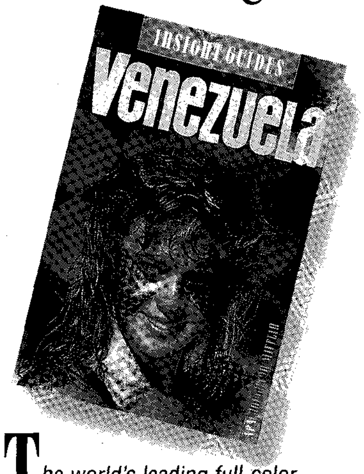

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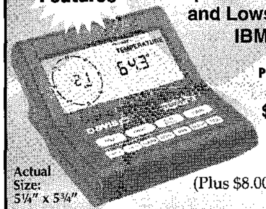

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family photographs and I'd say a cousin, or, incredibly, myself at a younger age; it was easier than trying to explain. At the end of the year, I found the card Drew had made in his desk. Drew, who tore the covers off his workbooks, wadded up assignments, and once scribbled in a brand-new library book, had preserved for more than six months the card that he'd made to comfort himself.

Over time, I began to realize how often even young children can feel as responsible as adults do for the people around them. My students wanted to protect their families; they wanted to protect *me*. "You don't have to walk me home, Ms. Mosle. My block is dangerous," one nine-year-old insisted. It was too dangerous for me but not for him. Another student, Roberto, described the sense of responsibility he felt when his mother fell and broke her leg:

> She was trying to walk on her foot with a walker and sometimes I help her walk but sometimes she don't want help. . . . she try to go to the bathroom and try to take a bath. Witch is the hard part so I help her to cary the chiar that's so heavy so [I ask] my father to hlep me and I help him sometimes, and [sometimes] he don't want no help so I said ok dad.

He gave me periodic updates on her recovery in his journal:

> She's walking a littile now and I help mom to walk and I give her water oh! . . . and I help her take a bath bursh her teeth help get dressed and help her cook and help her do breakfast put on her shoes and sock's and help put on her shirt and puts me to sleep at 8:00.

I wrote, "She is lucky to have such a nice son as you." At one point, he confessed:

> I was afraid that mother is going to die but she did'nt die and I was happy and proud of myself and when she came home it was her birthday and I speprail [surprise] her and give her gifts then she went to sleep. thank you for listen.

A FEW years ago, I finally pried open my sister's diary; I was in my late twenties. I had always assumed that my mother had forbidden me to read it because it contained some revelation that she feared would upset me: a dreadful description by my sister of her cancer or her fear of death—or even, perhaps, some damning remark about me. But these, it turned out, were childhood fantasies. My imagination, like Shameka's, had conjured up something far worse than the reality, and after reading the diary I concluded that my mom had never read it herself. I then set to wondering what she might have been afraid of finding inside: Criticism? Descriptions of an illness and suffering that she couldn't prevent or cure? Or just a glimpse of her daughter's lost personality—a loss that she didn't need or want to relive? Maybe my mother, unlike me, didn't need to go searching for clues to who my sister was. (As it happened, I was wrong: I recently learned that of course she had read it, too.)

The diary is, in fact, almost completely empty. The entries begin on September 14, 1969; my sister was ten years old and had just begun the fourth grade. For several months, her entries continue in this vein:

> Sept. 19th, 1969 forgot.
>
> Sept. 20th 1969 forgot.
>
> September 21, 1969 Go to 9:00 church, then 10:50 church (choir). Come home from church. Play Kickball & Soccer with Brian and Jon (Sara, too) Try on clothes. Help mom.
>
> Sept. 22nd, 1969 School (Test) Music Dinner Bed.
>
> Sept. 23rd, 1969 School (Test) (orchestra) choir Dinner Bed.
>
> Sept. 24, 1969 School (Test) play bed.

I had to laugh: my sister's prose style was not unlike my own as a kid. Then, near the end of November, the entries abruptly stop. A few weeks before Christmas of that year, my sister woke up with a sharp pain in her abdomen, and my parents took her to the hospital. She had a malignant tumor on her liver, an almost unheard-of diagnosis in a child her age. On December 21st, she had the first of several operations; I can remember the date because it was the day after my sixth birthday. Entries don't appear again until the spring, and then there are only three, much like those above; another week's worth arrive when my sister attended summer camp; then there is nothing more until the following June.

I was grateful to learn that my sister's illness hadn't transformed her completely. (At the back of her diary is this list: "BOYS I LIKE: CHRIS B., DALE M., JEFF B.") Only in her last few entries is there any indication that she was ill:

> June 16, 1971. Wed. Went to have plasmapharesis blood test. Went have regular blood. Checked in at Methodist Hospital in Houston. Visited with David Mumford. Dr. Crawford and Dr. Eiband dropped by. Granny and Grandpa and Dad came by. Watch TV. Went to bed.

My sister's handwriting reveals a struggle over the spelling of "plasmapheresis." She had obviously encountered something that she didn't want or know how to explain. Does that mean, though, that she didn't understand what was happening to her? I don't know. Nowhere does she mention the chemotherapy, the needles, the catheters, the wig. Reading what she wrote, I understood the desire to back away from these things. (Our family's reticence finally made sense to me.) My sister made her last entry three months before she died:

> June 17, 1971. Went and have liver scan. Had biopsy. Laid on my side for four hours.

ONE afternoon, after my sister's death—I must have been eight or nine years old—I was sitting at my mother's dressing table, trying on her makeup and perfume. Grownups, I think, misunderstand the purpose of playing dress-up. I wasn't pretending to be my mother; I was trying to understand her. In my mind, those bottles and jars contained the secrets of adulthood. As I rummaged through her things, I came across a small cardboard box and opened it. I immediately recognized the contents and their import, and closed the box and put it away. I'd found what I was looking for; I never mentioned the discovery to my mom. Although I'm not sure how, I knew that the lock of blond hair was my sister's, and that it bespoke an enormous and unmentionable grief.

I had forgotten this incident until I began to teach. In education classes, I was constantly taught to be sensitive to the obvious differences between my students' backgrounds and my own. But by emphasizing the differences, I think, we sometimes forget that other people's children are like our own. As I read my students' journals, I came to appreciate our unexpected similarities. My students, like my sister, were recognizably children. They, like me, had a secret life that they were yearning to share. Roberto's mother did get well, but some weeks after her accident I asked him in his journal how she was doing. He wrote:

> I like to be a doctor and How about she dies before I grow up, and I will tell you when [she] dies. it a secret . . . it just between us, when my mother dies, am going to take a sissor and cut my mother hair for I won't forget her when she dies. P.S. don't tell nobody. See you soon. ♦

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PERSONAL HISTORY

A CASE OF THE GREAT POX

What was the worst news that a nineteen-year-old marine could get from a base doctor?

BY WILLIAM STYRON

Among the performances that helped make the movie "Casablanca" immortal was that of Claude Rains as the French police captain Louis Renault. Rains played the part with astringent urbanity and created a lasting model of the tough cop attractively humanized, Monsieur Nice Guy lurking behind the domineering swaggerer. I belong to the first of several generations that have fallen under the film's febrile romantic spell. By the late autumn of 1944 I had seen the film three times, and Rains seemed to me only slightly less crucial to its hypnotic unfolding than Bogart and Bergman. You may well imagine my amazement, then, when, in that wartime autumn, a veritable replica—the spitting image of Claude Rains—sat behind a desk in a doctor's office on the urological ward of the naval hospital at Parris Island, South Carolina. I stood at attention, looking down at him. A sign on the desk identified the doctor as "B. Klotz, Lieutenant Commander, Chief of Urology." I recall registering all sorts of impressions at once: the name Klotz, with its pathological overtone, and Klotz-Rains himself, duplicated—somewhat narcissistically, I thought—as he posed in prewar civvies in one of several framed photographs on the wall. The other photographs, completing a kind of triumvirate of authority, were of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Admiral Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations. There was one notable difference between Klotz and Rains, aside from the doctor's white blouse instead of the gendarmerie kepi and tunic. It was that the actor, even when he was trying to be threatening, had a twinkly charm, a barely repressed bonhomie, while Klotz appeared merely threatening. I knew that this was not the beginning of a beautiful friendship. That morning, Klotz sat silent for a moment, then came directly to the point. No elegant British vocables. In a flat, mid-Atlantic accent, he said, "Your blood tests have been checked out, and they indicate that you have syphilis."

I remember my cheeks and the region around my mouth going numb, then beginning to tingle, as if my face had been dealt a brutal whack. Traumatic events powerfully focus the perceptions, leaving ancillary details embalmed forever in memory—in this case, the window just beyond Klotz's head, a frost-rimed pane through which I could see the vast asphalt parade ground swarming with platoon after platoon of Marine recruits like me (or like me until the day before, when I was sent to the hospital), performing the rigorous choreography of close-order drill. Dawn had not yet broken, and the men moved in and out of the light that fell in bright pools from the barracks. Most of the platoons were marching with rifles, a drill instructor tramping alongside and screaming orders that I couldn't hear but that, up close, would have sounded like those of a foul-mouthed and hysterical madman. Other platoons remained still, at ease, shrouded in cigarette smoke, or exhaled breath, or both; it was a bitterly cold November. Beyond the parade ground and its clumps of marines in green field jackets were rows of wooden barracks. And beyond the barracks lay the waters of Port Royal Sound, roiled by an icy wind. All these things registered in my mind clearly, but at the same time they seemed to coalesce around a single word, uttered by the voice of Klotz: *syphilis*.

"You will remain on this ward indefinitely for further observation," Klotz continued. There was an unmistakably antagonistic tone in his voice. Most doctors in my past—the few I'd had contact with, anyway—had been chummy, avuncular, and genuinely if sometimes clumsily sweet-mannered. Klotz was of another breed, and he caused my stomach to go into spasm. I thought, What a prick. Before dismissing me, he ordered me to report to the duty pharmacist's mate, who would instruct me about the series of regulations I'd be subject to while on the ward, a regime Klotz referred to as "the venereal protocol." He then told me to return to my bed, where I would wait until further notice. I was wearing a blue hospital robe, in the pocket of which I had thrust a copy of one of the first paperback anthologies ever published, a volume that had kept me company for at least two years—"The Pocket Book of Verse," compiled by an academic named M. Edmund Speare. My legs had an aqueous, flimsy feeling. I lurched back down the ward, still numb around the mouth, gripping the book with feverish desire, like a condemned Christian clutching a Testament.

I should say a word about the great pox, so named, in the sixteenth century, to distinguish the illness from smallpox. Although syphilis had been regarded, since the late fifteenth century, as a plague that would never in any real sense yield to the strategies of medical science, it had been dealt a sudden and mortal blow only a year or so before my diagnosis. It was one of medicine's most dramatic victories, like Jenner's discovery of a smallpox vaccine, or Pasteur's defeat of rabies. The breakthrough took place soon after American researchers—building on the work of Sir Alexander Fleming, who had discovered penicillin, in the twenties, and Sir Howard Florey,

Opposite: Parris Island, South Carolina, 1944. "I had the impression that I was a very special case," Styron says, "hurled into an incomprehensible purgatory where neither treatment nor even the possibility of a cure was part of my ultimate destiny."

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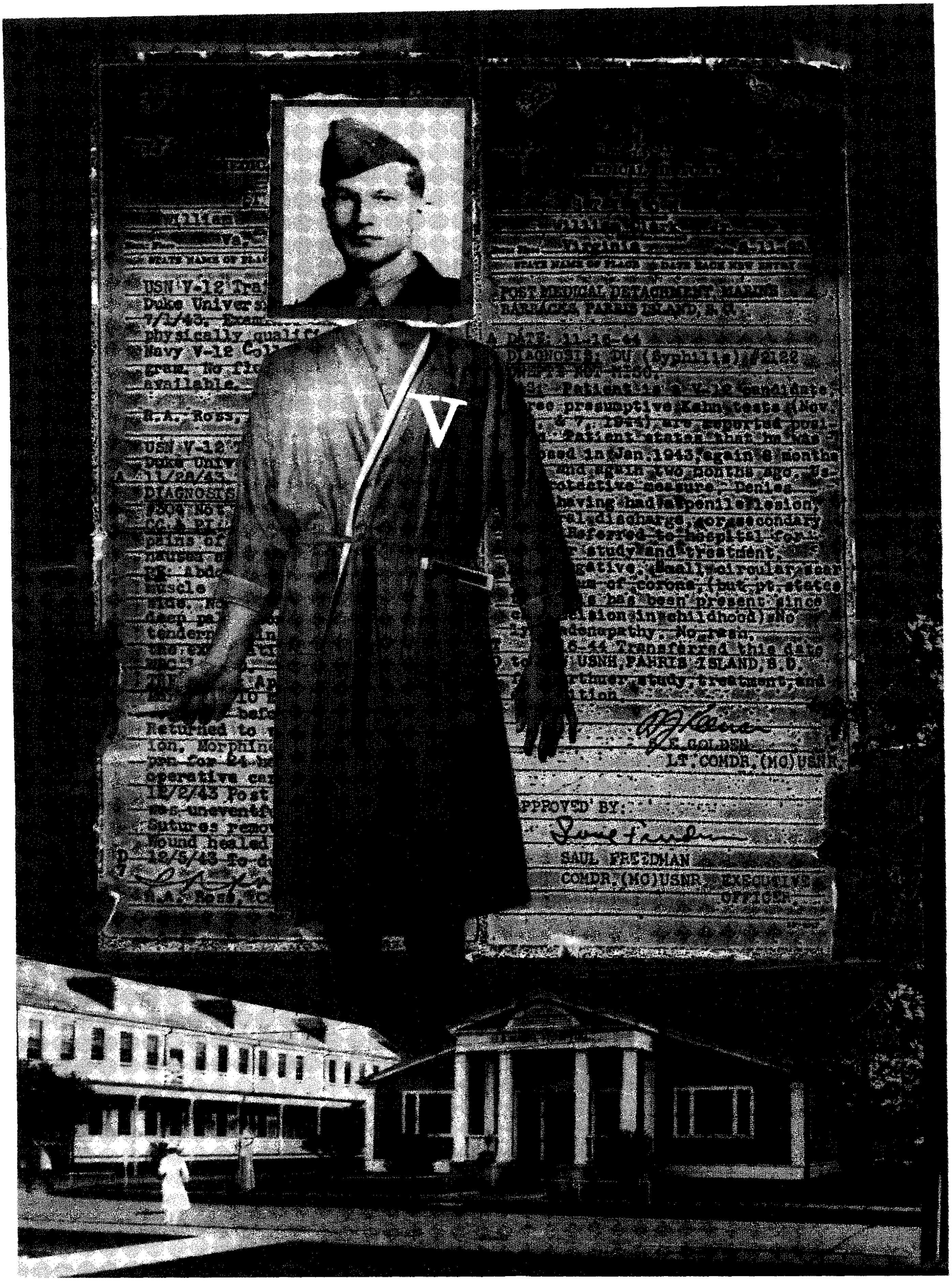William
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R.A. Ross,
Virginia
POST MEDICAL DETACHMENT, MARINE
BARRACKS, PARRIS ISLAND, S.C.
A DATE: 11-16-44
DIAGNOSIS: DU (Syphilis) #2128
Patient is a V-12 candidate.
presumptive Kahn tests (Nov.
& 7, 1944) are reported posi-
Patient states that he was
osed in Jan. 1943, again 6 months
and again two months ago. No
rotective measure. Denies
having had a penile lesion,
discharge, or secondary
Referred to hospital for
study and treatment.
gative. Small circular scar
of corona, (but pt. states
has been present since
sion in childhood). No
denopathy. No rash.
6-44 Transferred this date
USNH, PARRIS ISLAND, S.C.
further study, treatment, and
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F. GOLDEN
LT. COMDR. (MC) USNR
APPROVED BY:
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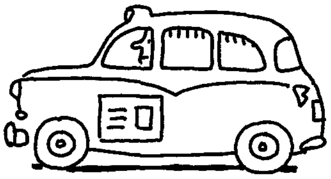
OFFICER

who had developed a technique for producing the drug—found that a one-week course of the miraculous mold could wipe out all traces of early syphilis, and even certain late-stage manifestations of the illness. (Penicillin also had a devastating effect on the other major venereal scourge, gonorrhea, a single injection usually being sufficient to put it to rout.) Since mid-1943, the medical authorities of the American armed forces had ordered doctors in military hospitals around the globe to discontinue a syphilis treatment called arsphenamine therapy and to commence using penicillin as it became available. Arsphenamine—better known, variously, as salvarsan, 606, or the magic bullet—was an arsenic-based compound developed in 1909 by the German bacteriologist Paul Ehrlich. He discovered that his new drug (proved successful on the six hundred and sixth try) could knock out syphilis without killing the patient; it was a remarkable advance after several hundred years during which the principal nostrum was mercury, a substance that worked capriciously, when it worked at all, and was for the most part as dangerous as the disease itself.



Because the disease sprang from the dark act of sex, syphilis was not a word uttered casually in the Protestant environment of my Virginia boyhood; the word raised eyebrows around America even when it was discreetly murmured in “Dr. Ehrlich’s Magic Bullet,” a 1940 movie starring Edward G. Robinson, who I thought was a pretty convincing healer after his parts as a ruthless mobster. “Dr. Ehrlich’s Magic Bullet” didn’t make much of an impression on me; I doubtless was too young. But even if I had been older I would probably not have realized that the movie failed to tell an essential truth. While the doctor’s magic bullet was a vast improvement over the forlorn remedy of the past, his treatment was shown to be sadly insufficient; the drug rendered patients noncontagious, but it wasn’t a very reliable cure, and the treatment required dozens of painful and costly injections over such a long period of time—often many months—that patients often became discouraged, and were consequently prone to relapses. So the epidemic suffered a setback but was not halted. It would take Alexander Fleming’s surefire bactericidal fungus to produce the real magic. And I was in the vanguard of those victims upon whom this benison would descend. Or so it seemed, until, with a gradual dawning that was sickening in itself, I began to suspect that health was not so readily at hand.

As a diagnosed syphilitic, I had good cause to think passionately about penicillin during the interminable hours and days I spent in the Clap Shack, as such wards were known throughout the Navy. But, from the first day following Dr. Klotz’s announcement, I had the impression that I was a very special case. I was not an ordinary patient, whose treatment would follow the uneventful trajectory toward cure, but one who had been hurled into an incomprehensible purgatory where neither treatment nor even the possibility of a cure was part of my ultimate destiny. And this hunch turned out to be correct. From the outset, I was convinced not only that I had acquired the most feared of sexually transmitted diseases but that I would at some point keel over from it, probably in an unspeakable cellular mud slide or convulsion of the nervous system. As an early-blooming hypochondriac, a reader besotted with “The Merck Manual,” I had a bit more medical savvy than most kids my age, and what my diagnosis actually portended made me clammy with dismay. I believed that I was beyond the reach of penicillin. I was sure that I was a goner, and that certainty never left me during the days that stretched into weeks of weirdly demoralizing confinement.

MY bed was at the very end of the ward, and I had a view from two windows, at right angles to each other. From one window, I could see the sound, a shallow inlet of the Atlantic, on the edge of freezing; from the other, I had a glimpse of a row of barracks not far away, and, between the barrack buildings, concrete laundry slabs, where marines bedevilled by the cold—I watched them shake and shiver—pounded at their near-frozen dungarees beneath sluiceways of water. What nasty little Schadenfreude I might have felt at their plight was dispelled by my own despair at having been separated from longtime buddies, whom I’d gone to college with, officer candidates like me—or like the person I had been before the onset of an illness that, because of its carnal origin and the moral shame it entailed, would prevent me from even thinking of becoming a lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps.

Winkler, the hospital corpsman who had checked me onto the ward, returned to bring me these tidings. No way, he said, that you can get a Marine commission if you’ve had V.D. He had other awful news, too, most of it bearing on my health. After escorting me to my sack and telling me where to stow my seabag, he told me—in answer to my bewildered “Why the hell am I here?”—that my Kahn test was so high it had gone off the chart. “It looks to me,” he said with maddening whimsy, “like you’ve got a case of the great pox.” When I asked him what a Kahn test was, he replied with a counter-question: Had I ever heard of a Wassermann reaction? I replied, Of course, every schoolboy knew about a Wassermann. A Kahn, Winkler explained, was almost the same as a Wassermann, only an improvement. It was a simpler blood test. And then, as I recalled the endless trips I’d made in past days to the regimental dispensary to verify the first routine test, and the vial after vial of blood extracted from my arm, I had a foreshadowing of the stern warrant that Dr. Klotz would serve up to me the following morning. I must have radiated terror, for I sensed a conscious effort by Winkler to make me feel better; his tactic was to try to cast me as one of the élite. At the moment, he told me, I was the only syphilitic on the ward. Most of the patients were guys with the clap. And when, despondently, I asked him why he thought victims of syphilis, as opposed to those with gonorrhea, were such rarities, he came back with a theory that in my case was so richly inconceivable that it caused me to laugh one of the last spontaneous laughs I would laugh for a long time. “You can catch the clap a lot easier than syphilis,” he explained. “Syph you really have to work at to contract.” He added, with a hint of admiration, “You must have been getting a new piece of ass every day.”

After my interview with Klotz, which had taken place very early, before his regular morning rounds, I had a chance to sit next to my bed and take stock of my situation while the other patients slept. Winkler had explained the configuration of the ward. It was a warehouse of genitourinary complaints. On one side of the ward were a dozen beds occupied by clap patients. As a result of crowding in the clap section, I was lodged on the other side of the center aisle, at the end of a row of patients whose maladies were not venereal in origin. Most of these marines had kidney and bladder disorders, primarily infections; there was a boy who had suffered a serious blow to his kidney during one of the savage internecine boxing matches that the drill instructors, virtually all sadists, enjoyed promoting during morning exercises. There was an undescended testicle that Winkler said would never have got past the first medical screening in the robust volunteer days, before the draft allowed all sorts of misshapen characters into the Marine Corps. The marine in the sack next to me, breathing softly, his face expressionless in sleep's bland erasure, had just the day before been circumcised by Dr. Klotz; the fellow had suffered from a constrictive condition of the foreskin known as phimosis. Winkler's last task the previous night had been to swaddle the guy's groin in ice packs, lest nocturnal erections rip out the stitches—a mishap that obviously could never happen to a Jew, said Winkler, who was plainly New York Jewish, in a tone that was a touch self-satisfied. As for the marines with the clap, Winkler pointed out that in most cases this was not your standard garden-variety gonorrhea but an intractable chronic condition that usually came about as a result of the guys' refusing, out of shame or fear—and often out of sheer indifference—to seek treatment, so that the invasive gonococci began after time to wreak havoc in the prostate, or became lodged in the joints as an exquisitely painful form of arthritis. Marines and sailors from up and down the Atlantic Coast came to this ward for what was possibly last-ditch therapy, since Klotz was known as the best doctor in the Navy for handling such complications.

Later that first day, another hospital corpsman outlined to me the details of the venereal protocol. V.D. patients were in certain respects strictly segregated, both from their fellow-sufferers on the ward and from the hospital population at large. Our robes were emblazoned with a large yellow "V" over the breast. When we went to the head, we were expected to use specially designated toilets and basins. Those of us who were ambulatory were to eat at mess-hall tables reserved for our use. When we attended the twice-weekly movies at the base recreation center, we would be escorted in a separate group and then seated together in a section marked off by a yellow ribbon. I remember absorbing this information with queasiness, and then asking the corpsman why we were subject to such extraordinary precautions. While I was not unaware of the perils of V.D., I had no idea that we posed such a threat. But as soon as I began to express my puzzlement the corpsman explained that syphilis and gonorrhea were contagious as hell. True, most people got them only from sex, but one of those little microorganisms could infect through a tiny scratch. BUMED (as the Bureau of Medicine was called) was taking no chances; furthermore, he added, with a knowing look, Dr. Klotz "had a kind of personal fixation." This was an enigmatic, faintly sinister statement that became less opaque as time passed and Klotz became the dominant presence in my life.

As the only patient with syphilis, I was spared the short-arm inspection that was the centerpiece of Dr. Klotz's early rounds that morning and every morning at the stroke of six. At that hour, a bell in the ward jangled and the overhead lights came on in an explosion. The bedridden on my side of the aisle remained in their sacks. But in the interval of a minute or so between the flood of light and the appearance of Dr. Klotz, the dozen clap patients in the opposite row all scrambled to their feet and stood at ragged attention. There was usually a certain amount of wisecracking among these guys, along with self-dramatizing groans and reciprocal "Fuck you"s. Most of them were regulars, not effete college-bred recruits like me, and were five or ten years older than me. Their accents were about equally divided between Southern cracker and Northeast working class. I soon understood that many of these die-hard cases had one thing in common: they were obsessive Romeos, fornicators of serene dedication whose commitment to sexual bliss was so wholehearted that they could keep up a flow of jokes even as the disease that such pleasure had cost them gnawed away at the inmost mucous membranes of the genitalia and tortured the joints of their wrists and knees.

I was amazed at this nonchalance, and also at their apparently incandescent libi-

"Anything on women of pre-childbearing age?"

dos, especially since my own nineteen-year-old hormonal heat had plunged to absolute zero from the instant Dr. Klotz confirmed the nature of my problem; the word "syphilis" had made the very notion of sex nauseating, as if I were beset by some erotic anorexia. But the members of the gonorrhea faction quieted down as soon as Winkler or one of the other corpsmen shouted "Attention on deck!" and Klotz made his businesslike entrance through the swinging doors. It was important, Winkler had told me, that these bums be inspected as soon as they woke up, before heading to the urinals; from looking at the accumulated purulence called gleet, and checking the amount and consistency of the discharge, Klotz could determine how the treatment was proceeding. And so, accompanied by a litany—"Skin it back, squeeze it, milk it down"—intoned by the corpsman, Klotz would pass down the line of victims, making his evaluations. He didn't waste a word, and his manner was frostily judgmental, as if these rogues and whoremongers were unworthy of even so much as a casual "Good morning." Nor was his manner with me any less reproachful. As I stood stiffly at attention, I was thankful only that I didn't have to submit my dick to such a degrading scrutiny at that hour of the morning. During each tour of the ward, Klotz would glare at me briefly, ask the corpsman about my daily Kahn test—it remained at the highest (and therefore the most alarming) level, day in and day out—and then pass on to the non-venereal patients.

Early in the afternoon on that first day, however, Klotz did examine my penis. This was a procedure that I might ordinarily skip describing were it not for the monstrous effect that it had on my psychic balance, which had already been thrown badly out of whack. For it was Klotz's judgment regarding my penile history that helped crystallize my belief that I was doomed. I was summoned to his office, and, as I stood in front of him, he checked through my medical-record book and brusquely asked some routine questions. Any history of syphilis in my family? (What a question!) No, I lied. In the preceding weeks or months had I experienced any unusual rash or fever? I had not. Any swelling in the groin? No. Had I noticed any unusual growth on my penis? This would be a hard, painless ulcer, he said, called a chancre. I knew what a chancre was, everyone had heard about chancres (corpsmen were even known as "chancre mechanics"); but I had not seen one. During Klotz's interrogation, I held in view the eye-level portrait of a solemn, resolute Franklin D. Roosevelt, who kept looking back at me. I was grateful for the reassuring gaze of this surrogate father, my perennial President, the only one I had ever known, and I steadfastly stared back at him through most of Klotz's examination, which he carried out with cold, skeletal fingers.

He twisted my penis, not very gently, gave it an unnecessary squeeze or two and turned it upside down. I recall thinking that, though it had known various attitudes, it had rarely been upside down. Then he bade me to look down, saying that he had discovered, on the underside, a scar. Chancres leave scars, he murmured, and this looked like a chancre scar. I glanced down and, indeed, discerned a scar. A tiny reddish outcropping. Since the chancre had been painless, he added, it had come and gone, without my ever noticing its presence, leaving only that small scar. He seemed to have put aside, at least for the moment, his customary distaste. He said that the chance of my being infected by non-venereal contact was astronomically remote. The toilet seat was a myth. Syphilis usually created distinct symptoms, he went on—first the chancre, then, later, the fever and the rash—but quite often these symptoms never appeared, or appeared so insubstantially that they went unnoticed. Klotz surprised me by saying something that, in the midst of his dispassionate exegesis, sounded almost poetic: "Syphilis is a cruel disease." And then, after a brief silence during which I became aware that he was constructing an answer to the question that sheer fright kept me from asking, he declared, "What happens in the end is that syphilis invades the rest of the body." He paused and concluded, before dismissing me, "We're going to have to keep you here and figure out just how far it's advanced."

I went back to my bed at the end of the ward and, in the cold midday light, lay down. You weren't supposed to lie on a bed in daytime, but I did anyway. The hospital was a venerable wooden structure, warm, even overheated, but I felt nearly frozen, listening to the windows creaking and banging in the bluster of an Atlantic gale. The sex maniacs with the

THE MIAMI OF OTHER DAYS

(AN IMPROVISATION)

The city was not yet itself. It had,
In those days, the simplicity of dawn.
As for the bonfires up and down the beach,
They were nostalgias for the lights of cities
Left behind; and often there would be
Dancing by firelight to the new white jazz
Of a Victrola on its towel in the sand.

Hot afternoons, even the sea breeze sultry
And choking—and underneath the grateful awnings
Of downtown shops a foreign language spoken
With the sound of parrots, excited, incomprehensible;
And crackers down from Georgia (my own people)
Forgathered on the old post-office steps,
A sort of club, exchanging news from home;

The winter streets an orchestra of horns . . .

And gods slept under tabernacle tents
That sprang up overnight on circus grounds
Like giant toadstools yearning for respectability,

Who blessed in long white sleeves the multitudes;
Or dwelt beneath the still pure river, rising
From time to time for breath, like great sea cows,
Mysteriously human;
                    and there were
Sidewalk photographers with alligator props
Who disappeared a dozen times a day
Under the black hood of their trade—preservers!

But there was no history, there were only the storms—
And the great bourgeois criminals safely lodged
In tile-roofed bungalows of the first suburbs,
Living their lives out, bloody and circumspect.

Nor was the spell that held the city—invisible cloud—
Ever in those days wholly to be lifted.
O "Magic City" of my eighth-grade speech!
Aquarium of the little grounded yacht!
Bandshell of gardenia moons!
And Dr. Seward, astronomer, tipping his tall hat
(Like a magician's) each night to the stars
And to little scatterings of applause still circling maybe
Out there somewhere in the orbits of the lost.

—Donald Justice

clap across the aisle were noisily trading lewd adventures, and I gradually sank into a stupor of disbelief, beyond the consoling power of even "The Pocket Book of Verse," which had saved me in many a lesser crisis but was plainly beyond the scope of this one.

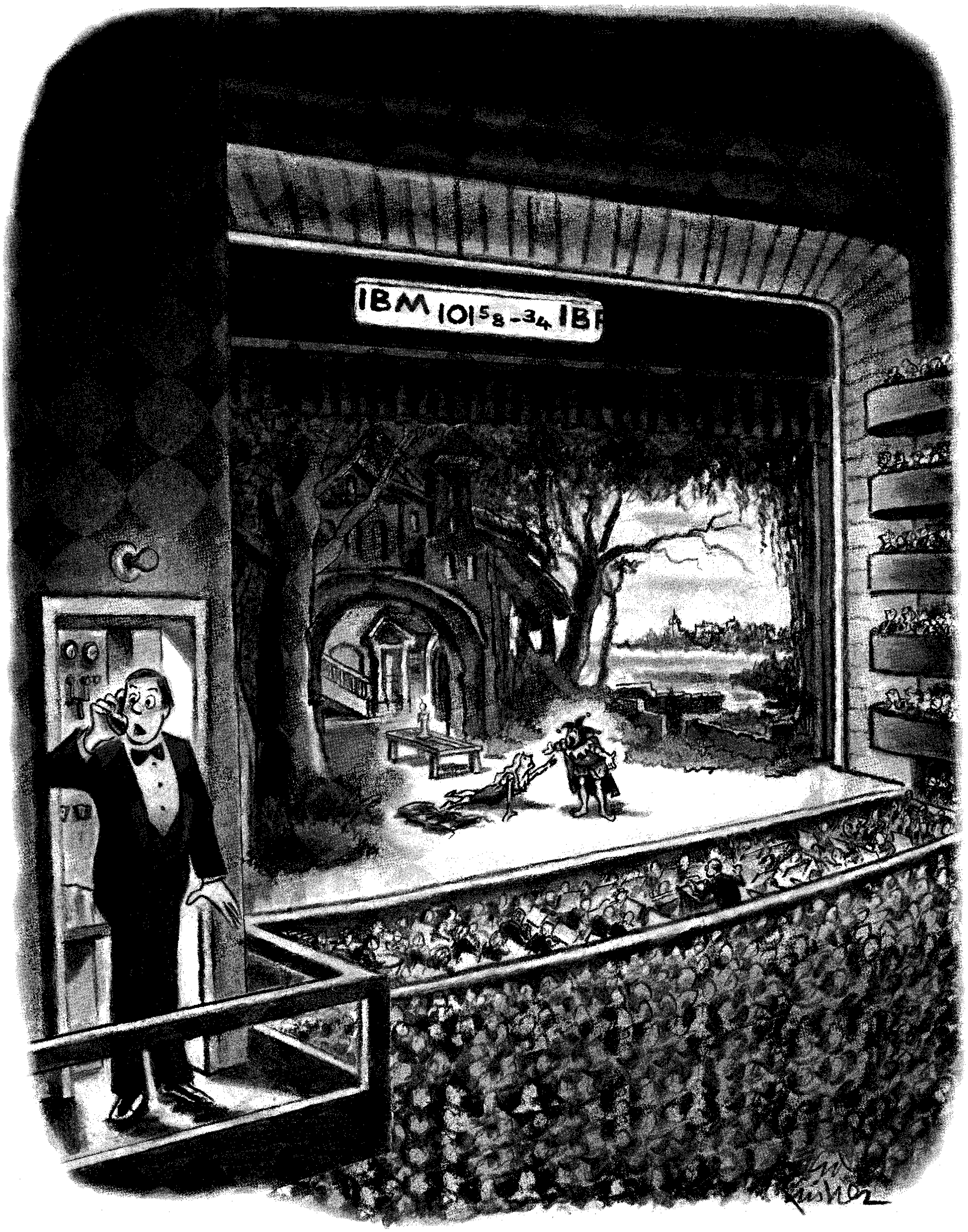
Its history "is unique among great diseases," the medical historian William Allen Pusey wrote, "in that it does not gradually emerge into the records of medicine as its character becomes recognized, but appears on the stage of history with a dramatic suddenness in keeping with the tragic reputation it has made; as a great plague sweeping within a few years over the known world."

This observation, made in the early part of the century, has an all too painful resonance today, and it might be worthwhile to compare syphilis with our present pandemic. Unlike AIDS, syphilis was not invariably fatal, despite its extremely high rate of mortality. This may have been its only saving grace, depending on whether death is viewed as a blessing preferable to the terrible and irreversible damage the disease is capable of inflicting on the body and the mind. After the introduction of Dr. Ehrlich's not-so-magic bullet, and especially after penicillin's knockout blow, syphilis lost much of its capacity to evoke universal dread. Still, for various reasons, it remained a horror, aside from the fact that no one wants to be infested by millions of *Treponema pallidum*, the causative microbe, whose wriggling corkscrew can reach the bone marrow and spleen within forty-eight hours of infection, and produce a persistent malaise, rashes, ulcerous skin lesions, and other debilitating symptoms. For one thing, there was the stigma—and I mean the appalling stigma arising from anything at all suggesting misbehavior as we young people traversed the parched sexual landscape of the thirties and forties.

I've mentioned that the word itself was taboo. Among nice people, "syphilis" was uttered sotto voce, if at all, and only occasionally found its way into print. "Social disease" and "vice disease" were the usual substitutes. When I was in grade school, the only time I recall the word's catching my eye was when I happened upon it in a medical pamphlet. I asked my teacher, a maiden lady of traditional reserve, what it meant. She instantly corrected my pronunciation, but her cheeks became flushed, and she didn't answer my question. Her silence made me guess at something wicked. And wicked it was in those prim years. For most of its existence in the Anglo-Saxon world, syphilis, as AIDS has often done, stained the people who contracted it with indelible disrepute.

But there was a far graver trouble: the sheer awfulness of the malady itself. Even after medical intervention, and treatment with penicillin, there could still be dire complications. No cure was absolutely foolproof. And my obsession—that syphilis had taken possession of my system and had commenced its inroads, penetrating tissues and organs, which thus had already suffered the first effects of dissolution—grew more fixed every day as I dragged myself through Dr. Klotz's venereal protocol. I wore my yellow "V" stoically, and soon got used to going to the mess hall and the movies in a segregated herd. I had plenty of time to brood about my condition, since there were no organized activities for patients on the ward. I kept wondering why I was not being treated. If penicillin could work its miracle, why was it not being used? It only aggravated my distress to think that the disease, for reasons beyond my understanding, had reached a stage where treatment was useless, and was merely waiting for some fatal resolution. I had to blot out thoughts like these. Mostly, I hung around the area near my bed, sitting on a camp stool and reading books and magazines from the small hospital library. I returned hesitantly to "The Pocket Book of Verse," to Keats and A. E. Housman and Emily Dickinson and "The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám."

Except during morning rounds, I never saw Dr. Klotz. My only actual duty was to bare my arm once a day for the Kahn test, which invariably showed the same results: "Off the chart," as Winkler had said. I grew friendly with Winkler, who seemed drawn to me, most likely because I'd been to college, and he'd had two years at C.C.N.Y. before Pearl Harbor. One of his generosities was a loan of a little red Motorola portable radio, which I kept tuned to the Savannah station and its news about the war. The bulletins added



IBM 101⅝ -¾ IB
Fisher

"Hate to bother you, but are you getting our supertitles for 'Rigoletto'?"

weight to the black and anxious mood that each afternoon crept over me—a mood that I would recognize only years later as the onset of a serious depression.

Just before I entered the hospital, marines had stormed ashore on a remote Pacific island called Peleliu and had met with "heavy Japanese resistance"—a common Pentagon euphemism to describe our troops' being slaughtered. What I heard on the radio was unsettling enough, but the news chiefly reminded me of the doubtfulness of my own future. For at least three years, I had lived with the bold and heady ambition of becoming a Marine lieutenant; to lead troops into combat against the Japs had been an intoxicating dream. A sexually transmitted disease was not permissible for an officer candidate, Winkler had ruefully pointed out to me—not even if he was cured, so ugly was the moral blotch—and thus I began to realize that the microorganisms seething like termites within me were destroying my vision of honor and achievement as effectively as they were laying waste to my flesh. But this regret, wrenching as it was, I could somehow deal with. What was close to intolerable—beyond the disgrace, beyond the wreckage it would make of my military ambition—was the premonition, settling around me like a fog bank, of absolute physical ruin. A death-in-life, for example, like that of my Uncle Harold, whose case was a harrowing paradigm of the malady, and of the disaster it could inflict.

He was my mother's younger brother, and at twenty-seven, during the Great War, he had gone overseas as an infantry corporal in the Rainbow Division. During the Saint-Mihiel offensive, he had suffered a bad shrapnel wound in the leg, and was mustered out in 1918 to his home town, in western Pennsylvania, where he married, had a son, and settled down to the life of a businessman. Sometime in the late twenties, he started to display odd behavioral symptoms: he woke at night in the grip of nightmares, and began to have terrifying hallucinations. He complained of anxiety and had almost daily episodes of feverish agitation, which caused him to speak of suicide. He told anyone who would listen that he was tormented by memories of the war, the agony of men and animals, the carnage. After he disappeared for a week and was finally found in a dingy Pittsburgh hotel room, fifty miles away, his wife made him seek medical help. At a veterans'-aid clinic a diagnosis was made of extreme psychosis as a result of the violence of war. The syndrome in those years was generally known as "shell shock." My uncle was sent to the mental unit of the veterans' hospital in Perry Point, Maryland, and there he remained for the rest of his life.

I RECALL visiting Uncle Harold with my mother and father once when I was a young boy, before the war. We were going to New York, and the visit was planned as a side trip on our way from Virginia. I had never seen him, except as a figure in photographs taken years earlier: a cheery kid with prominent teeth, like my mother's, and flashing, exuberant eyes. I had been fascinated by Uncle Harold, the war hero, and he had taken on for me an almost mythic shape. My mother was devoted to him, and, as a sedulous eavesdropper, I couldn't help but absorb all the captivating details of his dramatic life: the flaming battle for Saint-Mihiel that killed more than four thousand Americans, his letters describing the savagery of combat, his painful recovery in a convalescent facility behind the front, the breakdown in Pennsylvania, his sad confinement. By the time we turned up at the veterans' hospital on a luminous June day, I was looking forward excitedly, though with a touch of squirmy disquiet, to meeting my shell-shocked uncle. I don't remember whether my parents prepared me for the encounter, but it was certainly not like anything I might have imagined, and I think that they, too, may not have been ready for such an apparition.

The male attendant who brought him outside to greet us on the lawn seemed to feel the need to urge him along, as he tottered toward us in his Army-issue robe and slippers, with gentle but persistent prods to the back. This probably made him look even more helpless and disoriented than he actually was, but he was plainly a soul without a mooring. I was alarmed by his shambling gait and his empty gaze; I couldn't reconcile the old face, so bony and desiccated, and the balding skull and trembling hands with the vivid boy of the pictures. Most awful to me was the moment when he mechanically embraced my mother and whispered, "Hello, Edith." It was the name of their older sister.

We remained there on the hospital lawn for perhaps no more than an hour, amid the debris of a messy picnic. Uncle Harold said almost nothing as we sat on a bench, and the monosyllables my mother coaxed from him had a softly gargled incoherence. I knew that this was a scene I couldn't continue to witness, and I turned away in misery from my uncle and his drowned, sweetly musing brown eyes, and from the sight of my mother clutching his palsied hand, squeezing it over and over in some hopeless attempt at comfort or connection.

I later learned the truth about Uncle Harold. My father did not tell me until several years after my mother died, when I was eighteen or so, and presumably old enough to absorb the dread secret that our kinsman had been suffering not from shell shock but from syphilis. My father was a candid and sophisticated man, but even he had an awkward time telling me the truth. After the shock wore off, the knowledge that my uncle was still alive—that, as was so often the case, the microbes, rather than quickly murdering their host, held him hostage while they continued their leisurely depredations—made me ache inside. The great pox could dwell in a body for decades. By the time he was sent to the veterans' hospital he was most likely afflicted by late syphilis; according to my father, the disease was acquired after his marriage and the birth of his only child. There was never a hint that either my aunt or my cousin, a boy whom I spent many summers with, had been tainted by the illness. But who knew exactly when he had got it? Somehow the plague had entered him. It had been a quiet case, but viciously malignant, beyond reach of the magic bullet or any other medical stratagem, and at the time of our visit he was succumbing to forms of neurosyphilis that devastate the brain and the spinal cord. The spirochetes had wrought a vegetative madness.

I thought a lot about Uncle Harold during my stay on the ward. Especially at night, in the dark, with Winkler's little radio pressed against my ear, trying to distract myself with the Artie Shaw or Glenn Miller tunes I could capture from the ether, I'd have a moment of sudden, heart-stopping panic and my uncle would draw ineluctably near. I could sense him in his hospital robe, silent, standing somewhere close by among the sleeping marines, a stooped figure whose presence portended a future I dared not think about.

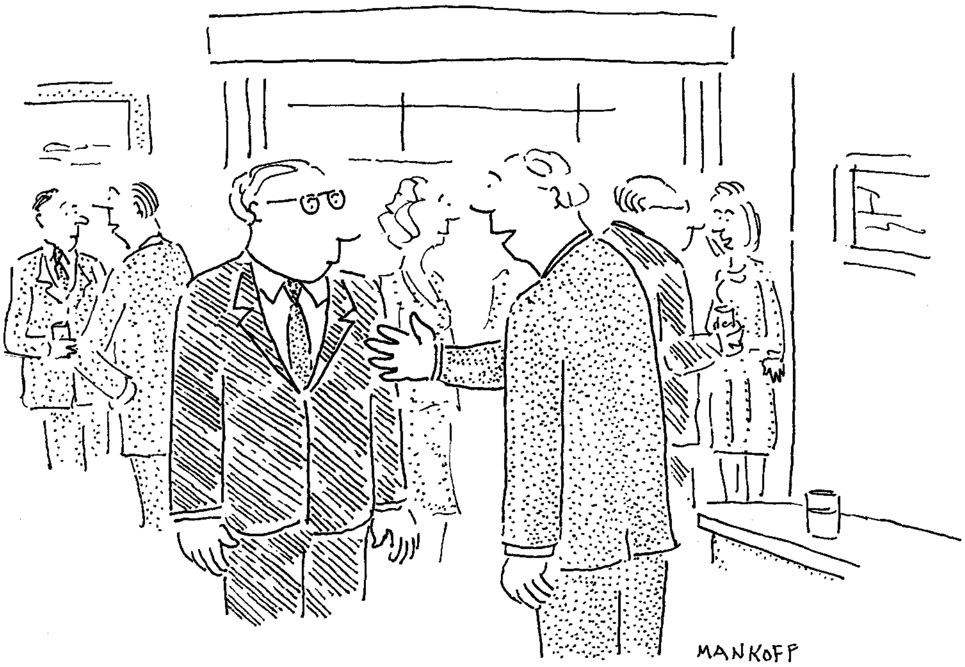
WHILE on a trip through Europe in 1760, Giovanni Casanova, that tireless gadabout, cocksman, and celebrity hound, stopped at Ferney to pay a visit to Voltaire. There seems to be no record of the two superstars' talking about syphilis, but it would have been a fitting topic, given its perennial fashionableness, and if they had spoken of it their attitude, in all likelihood, would have had a mocking overtone. Voltaire never let the horrid nature of the illness obtrude upon his own lighthearted view of it—he wrote wittily about the great pox in "Candide"—and throughout Casanova's memoirs there are anecdotes about syphilis which the author plainly regards as excruciatingly funny. Making sport of it may have been the only way in which the offspring of the Enlightenment could come to grips with a pestilence that seemed as immutably fixed in history as war or famine. In a secular age, gags were appropriate for an inexplicable calamity that in olden times was regarded as divine retribution. Previous centuries had seen people calling on God for help, and God had not answered.

The disease first swept like a hurricane over Europe during the period of Columbus's voyages (whether Columbus and his crew were responsible for importing syphilis from the West Indies is disputed by scholars, but it seems a strong possibility), and took an exceptionally virulent form, often killing its victims in the secondary, or rash-and-fever, stage, which most people in later epochs (including me) weathered without harm. In its congenital mode, it was particularly disfiguring and malevolent, which increased the terror. No wonder that the Diet of Worms, the same assembly that condemned Martin Luther for heresy, issued a mandate declaring that the "evil pocks" was a scourge visited upon mankind for the sin of blasphemy.

But it was the doctrine of original sin, falling upon both Catholics and backslid Presbyterians like me, that made the sufferers of syphilis pay a special price in moral blame unknown to those who acquired other diseases. This was particularly true in the early Victorian era, when a return to faith, after a long time of frivolous impiety, was coupled with a return to the Pauline precept that the act of sex is an act of badness—absolute badness more often than not, exceeding all other abominations. This connection with sexuality gave syphilis, in a puritanical culture, its peculiar aura of degradation. As Susan Sontag has shown in "Illness as Metaphor," her study of the mythology of disease, all the major illnesses have prompted a moralistic and punitive response, and have given rise to entire theoretical systems based on phony psychologizing. The bubonic plague implied widespread moral pollution; tuberculosis was the product of thwarted passion and blighted hopes, or sprang from "defective vitality, or vitality misspent"; out of emotional frustration or repression of feeling has come the curse of cancer, whose victims are also often demonically possessed. As I have discovered firsthand, mental disorders may be the worst, inviting suspicion of inborn feebleness. In such views, the disease itself expresses the character of the victim. Syphilis, however, has suffered a different stigma, one that has been of a singularly repellent sort. It has reflected neither feebleness nor misspent vitality nor repression of feeling—only moral squalor. In recent years, AIDS has been similarly stigmatized, despite extensive enlightenment. But in square, churchgoing America at the time of my diagnosis a syphilitic was regarded not as a sexual hobbyist whose pastime had got out of hand—in other words, with the ribald tolerance Voltaire would have brought to the circumstance—but as a degenerate, and a dangerously infectious one at that. Doctors are, of course, supposed to be free of such proscriptive attitudes, but there are always some who are as easily bent as anyone else by religion or ideology. Klotz was one of these, and, while I'm sure that he was only doing his duty in tracking my history, his temper was chillingly adversarial. Also, he was, in my case, guilty of an act of omission that unalterably stamped him as a doctor who hated not the disease but its victims.

As the wintry days and nights in the hospital wore on, and the Kahn tests continued to show my blood serum swarming with spirochetes, and I worried myself into a deeper and deeper feeling of hopelessness, I brooded over my past sex life, which seemed to me a paltry one, at least numerically speaking. By what improbable mischance had I sealed my doom? Even in those repressed years of the Bible Belt South, to have had at nineteen only three partners, two of whom I'd met in boozy mayfly matings already dimming in memory, scarcely made me feel like a red-hot lover, much less the randy alley cat generally associated with the disease. Still, as Winkler pointed out, even though syphilis was not as widespread as the clap, all it took was one quick poke in the wrong partner's hole and a man could be done for. Whose hole, then, and when? The actual encounters were all so recent, and together so few, that I could easily let my mind pounce on each one, trying to figure out which specific grappling had permitted the *T. pallidum* to begin its infestation.

On a bright morning, as I sat on my

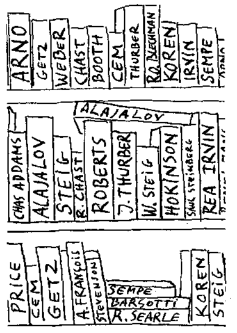


"Hi. I'm, I'm, I'm . . . You'll have to forgive me, I'm terrible with names."

camp stool plunged into one of these self-lacerating reveries, Winkler came up with a mournful look to say that he was sorry but my Kahn remained "highly reactive." Then he announced that Dr. Klotz—finally, after many days—wished to see me, to take my case history. Was I religious? he asked. When I said that I wasn't but asked him why he wanted to know, the corpsman rolled his eyes, then declared, "He's got a kind of narrow-minded view of things." And he added, as he had once before, that it was all part of a "personal fixation."

As I look back on that time, I can see that Klotz, whatever the complexities of his motivation, had a need to squeeze the most out of the vindictive rage against syphilis already prevailing in the armed forces—one that mirrored the broader abhorrence in American society. While Klotz was doubtless not typical of Navy doctors, or the medical profession in general, he was working well within the pious and cold-blooded restraints regarding sexually transmitted diseases that had prevailed in the Navy for many years. During the First World War, President Wilson's Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, a godly North Carolinian if there ever was one, made history in a small way by banishing alcohol from officers' wardrooms and elsewhere on naval ships and bases, thereby bringing to an end an ancient and cherished custom. But at least this created no mortal danger. In his intolerance of carnality, Daniels ruled against a proposal that sailors and marines be given free access to condoms, and thus became responsible for unnumbered venereally related illnesses and deaths. Apart from his own belief, Klotz was obviously the inheritor of a tradition with a firm root in Southern Christian fundamentalism.

In presenting my case history to Klotz that morning, I had to describe my relations with a girl and two older women. Klotz referred to these as "exposures." While the doctor took notes, I told him that, almost exactly two years before, I had lost my virginity for two dollars in a walkup hotel room in Charlotte, North Carolina. I was a college freshman, and the woman was about thirty-five. In answer to his question whether I had used protection, I replied that I thought so but could not be sure, since I had drunk too much beer for clear memory. I then went on to the next exposure. (What I did not describe to Klotz was the interminable anxiousness of waiting in the dismal little hotel lobby while my anesthetized classmate, a raunchy dude from Mississippi, who had initiated our debauch, preceded me for what seemed hours with Verna Mae, which was what she called herself. Nor did I tell the doctor that my memory of Verna Mae was of an immensely sad and washed-out towhead in a stained slip and dirty pink slippers, who raised a skinny arm and took my two dollars with such lassitude that I thought she might be ill; nor did I recount being nearly ill myself, from apprehension and a stomach-churning disbelief at the idea that what I'd awaited with anxious joy since the age of twelve was about to happen, something so unbearably momentous that I barely registered the words when, sliding the two bucks into her brassiere, she said in a countrified voice, "I sure hope you don't have to take as long as that friend of yours.")



The second exposure was a girl, age eighteen, a college sophomore I'll call Lisa Friedlaender. (It is a reflection on the aridity of sexual life in the forties—even, or, I should say, especially, on college campuses—that there was a gap of nearly a year and a half between Verna Mae and Lisa.) I told Klotz that I had met Lisa, who was from Kew Gardens, New York, at a college in Danville, Virginia, the previous spring. I was by then enrolled in the Marine V-12 program at Duke and had travelled up to Danville for a weekend. That weekend, we had had intercourse (a word that made me writhe but that Klotz encouraged), and we had had it many times after that, both protected and unprotected, on my weekend leaves in April and May. She went home to Kew Gardens for summer vacation, and when she returned to Danville we resumed intercourse, having weekend sex until I was sent here to Parris Island. I was certain that Lisa was not the source of the disease, I went on, since I was only her second partner and she was from a proper middle-class Jewish background, where the acquiring of such an illness was unlikely. (I had often wondered how a proper middle-class Southern lad like me had come to deserve anyone as angelic as my ripe and lively Lisa, with her incontinent desires, which matched mine and were the real reason, though I didn't tell Klotz, for our frequent lack of protection: we were fucking so continuously and furiously that I ran out of condoms. My native Wasp folklore, which tended to idealize asthenic, inaccessible blondes, had not prepared me for this dark and lusty creature; we began rolling around on a moonlit golf green within two hours of our first meeting. I didn't tell this to Klotz, either, though Klotz the moral inquisitor at one point tipped his hand by demanding, "Were you in love?" To this I had no reply, having a sense that such a question really implied a policy decision. What of course was impossible to make Klotz understand about love was that if you were not yet twenty, and were a marine eventually headed for the Pacific, who shared with your brothers the conviction that you would never see twenty-one, or a girl ever again, and if the delirium of joy you felt the first time Lisa Friedlaender's nipples sprang up beneath your fingertips was love, then you were probably in love.)

My last exposure was a woman named Jeanette. Age about forty. I told Klotz that I was with a fellow-marine in Durham when we picked up old Jeanette and a female friend at a barbecue joint one night during the past August. They were both employees of the Liggett & Myers factory, where they worked on an assembly line making cigarettes. I had intercourse with Jeanette only once, unprotected. (The subtext in the case was largely anaphrodisiac amnesia. As with Verna Mae, the beer I had consumed made memory a slide show of incoherent instants: a wobbling ramble through the dark, collapsing together on the cold ground of a Baptist churchyard, hard by a tombstone, and inhaling the sweet raw smell of tobacco in the frizzy hair of Jeanette, who had just come off the night shift. I remembered nothing of the act itself, but for some obscure reason, as my confession spilled forth, the recollection of the carton of Chesterfields she had given me left a taste of sadness.)

When I finished, Klotz fiddled with his notes for a moment, then said, "You betrayed the girl, didn't you?"

I nodded my miserable agreement but made no reply.

"Has it occurred to you that you might have infected her?"

Again I nodded, for the possibility of having passed on the contagion had lingered in my mind for days, jabbing me with fierce self-reproach.

"You probably were infected by the prostitute in Charlotte or the woman in Durham," the doctor said. "Syphilis is prevalent among lower-class Southern white women. That's why it's dangerous to go roaming around in the wrong places if you can't practice abstinence."

I couldn't respond to this. Although I was smothered with regret, I felt no remorse and was not about to say that I was sorry.

"There's no way now of knowing which woman infected you. Suppose you now just write a letter to that girl and tell her that she may have been exposed to syphilis. You should also tell her to get tested right away and have appropriate treatment."

I recall trying to retrieve, at that moment, some serene boyhood memory, a foolish escapade, any innocent event that might let me float above this anguish, but Klotz was too quick to permit me the solace.

"Nature has a way of compensating for nearly every reckless thing we do," he said.

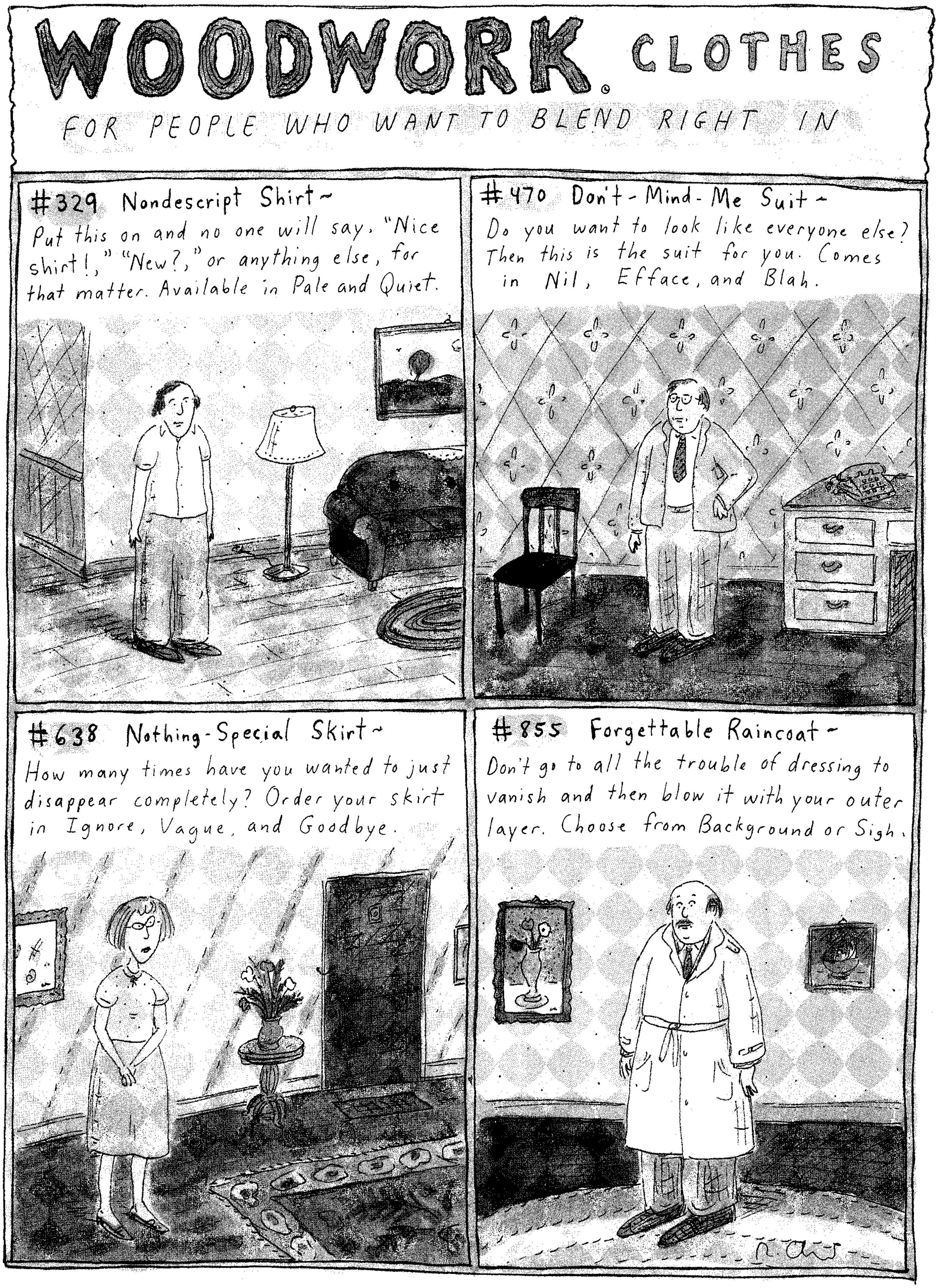
A DAY or two after my interview with Klotz, the hospital corpsmen began to place tacky Christmas ornaments up around the ward; they painted a silver "Noël" on the glass of the door and hung a hideous plastic trumpet-tooting angel from the central light fixture. The same day, I noticed that my gums were beginning to bleed. There had been some irritation before, but I had ignored the tenderness. This was serious bleeding. It was not "pink toothbrush," a symptom employed to help advertise Ipana, the hot toothpaste of the day. It was a slight but constant seepage of blood into my mouth, one that made me aware of the sweetish taste throughout the day and left a red stain on my handkerchief whenever I blotted it away. I could tell it was aggravated by smoking—but I kept steadily puffing. My gums had become raw and spongy, and that night the act of toothbrushing created a crimson cataract. I developed a feverish, cruddy feeling. I was terrified, but I kept my alarm to myself. The spirochetes were on the attack. There were countless ways the disease could make itself known, and I calculated that this was just one of them. When I told Winkler about my new trouble, he seemed puzzled, but said I should pay a visit to the hospital dentist, who might at least be able to relieve some of my distress. The dental officer was a dour man, trapped in routine, who offered neither comfort nor explanation; he did, however, swab out my mouth with a florid and repulsive lotion called gentian violet, a vial of which he gave me for daily application. It was an absurdity, a flimsy barrier against the onrushing ruin.

Days passed in a kind of suspended monotony of fear. Meanwhile, the weight of hopelessness, bearing down on my shoulders with almost tactile gravity—I thought of a yoke in the animal, burdened-down sense—had become a daily presence; I felt a suffocating discomfort in my brain. Sitting on a camp stool next to my bed, remote from the other marines, I began to withdraw into the cocoon of myself. The sex-demented clap patients, jabbering about cunt and pussy, magnified my despair. I lost my appetite. Outside my window, marines marched in the distance on the asphalt drill field, exhaling clouds of frigid breath. The glittering white inlet of the ocean rolled endlessly eastward like Arctic tundra. At night, after lights-out, I began to prowl the ward, padding about in anxiety until, returning to the stool, I would sit and stare at the expanse of water, dim in the starlight, and seemingly frozen solid. What a blessed relief it would be, I thought, to lie down and be encased in that overcoat of ice, motionless, without sensation and, finally, without care, gazing up at the indifferent stars.

I had kept up a busy correspondence during my early Marine Corps days. Fat envelopes, lots of them with addresses in familiar handwriting, envelopes of various colors and lengths (some with a not-yet-stale hint of perfume), were gifts that guys in the service awaited with greedy suspense, like children at Christmastime. I kept my seabag stuffed with reread letters, and Lisa Friedlaender had written to me often at Parris Island. In that buttoned-up age, it was probably not all that common for letter-writing lovers to express their craziness in steamy strophes, but Lisa had a gifted hand. Her remembrances to me were generously graphic and sometimes astonishing; she was way ahead of her time. But those were letters I could not read any longer; the very packet, which I kept tied up with string, was cursed with a vile pathology. Nor, despite Klotz's order, could I bring myself to write to Lisa.

Instead, I addressed myself to another problem: that of maintaining my composure in the face of a final, insupportable outrage. One morning, Winkler brought me two letters—one from Lisa (I put it away, unread) and one from my stepmother. Only two years before, my father had married, for reasons I was never able to fathom, an ungainly, humorless, pleasure-shunning middle-aged spinster, and the antipathy we felt for each other had been almost as immediate as our differences were irreconcilable. She was an observant Christian, curiously illiberal for an Episcopalian, while I had proudly begun to announce my skepticism and my fealty to Camus, whose "Le Mythe de Sisyphe" I'd read laboriously but with happiness in French at Duke, and whose principles, when I outlined them to her, she deemed "diabolical." I thought her a prig, she considered me a libertine. She was a teetotaller, I drank—a lot. Once, frankly baiting her while a little crocked, I praised masturbation as a universal delight, and she denounced me to my father as a "pervert." (I *had* gone too far.) She was educated, intelligent, and that made her bigotry the more maddening. I preserved a chill truce with the woman because of my love for my misguided father. She was a teacher of nursing, actually quite a good one—even, in a way, distinguished (onetime district president of the Graduate Nurses Association)—and therein lay another contradiction: nurses, like doctors, were supposed to be free of the moralism that drove her to write a pious letter meant to make me writhe on the rack of my dereliction.

How appalled she and my father were, she wrote, at the terrible news. (I had sent them a letter in which I was disingenuous enough to say that I had been sidelined with "a little blood problem," an evasion she immediately scented.) The only serious blood problem I could have was one of the malignant diseases like leukemia, and I plainly didn't have that, given my remarks about feeling in such good health. She went on to predict, in her chilly, professional way, that in all likelihood I could be cured by the new antibiotics, *provided* the disease had not progressed too far into the CNS (central nervous system, she explained helpfully, adding that the damage could be fearful and irreversible). Shifting into the spiritual mode, she informed me that one


WOODWORK© CLOTHES
FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BLEND RIGHT IN
#329 Nondescript Shirt ~
Put this on and no one will say, "Nice shirt!," "New?," or anything else, for that matter. Available in Pale and Quiet.
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Do you want to look like everyone else? Then this is the suit for you. Comes in Nil, Efface, and Blah.
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How many times have you wanted to just disappear completely? Order your skirt in Ignore, Vague, and Goodbye.
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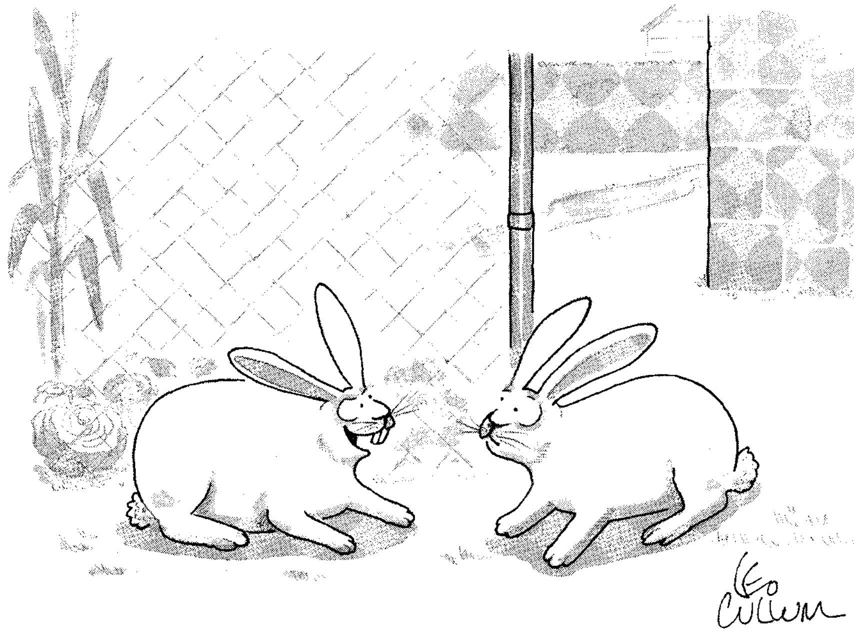


"The entire time you were talking to Marissa you had a piece of spinach between your teeth."

• •

could only pray that the illness had not yet been invasive. She had no intention of judging me, she announced (pointing out that there was, of course, a Higher Judge), but then she asked me to look back on my recent way of life and ponder whether my self-indulgent behavior had not led to this—the words remain ineffaceable to this day—"awful moment of truth." Finally, she hoped I would be reassured that, in spite of her disapproval of the conduct that had brought me to this condition, she cared for me very, very much.

In pondering these events of fifty years ago, I've never felt seriously betrayed by memory—most of the moments I've re-created are so fresh in my mind that they have the quality of instant replay—but I know that I've been slightly tricked from time to time, and I've had to adjust my account of these events. That memory could be a clever deceiver was neatly demonstrated, when I began finishing this chronicle, by my "Medical History"—a little manual, faintly mildewed, with pages the color of a faded jonquil—that surfaced among my Marine Corps mementos while I was searching for something else. This is the standard medical record that accompanies every marine throughout his career. While my lapses were minor, the "Medical History" showed me to be quite off the mark about certain matters of chronology. I could have sworn, for example, that I was still in the hospital until a few days before Christmas, when in fact I had been returned to duty by then; the awful Yuletide decorations I recalled must have adorned not the ward but my barracks, considerably later. Also, I have written of those apparently unceasing Kahn tests, a ritual that kept me tense with fear. It seems impossible to me now that I was not bled daily—as I awaited the results, I recall, I was nearly devoured by anxiety—but the "Medical History" shows that there were only five of these procedures in the course of a month. I'm fascinated by the fact that my tendentious memory lured me into exaggerating the number of times I experienced this torture.

But Dr. Klotz and his behavior have remained mysterious. The "Medical History" reveals only his routine notations and a final, meticulously clear signature. I think Klotz has compelled my attention (slightly this side of obsession) all these years because, to put it simply, he was frightening. He represented, in his bloodless and remote way, the authority figure that most people dread encountering but so often do meet face to face: the dehumanized doctor. In later years, I would come to know many exemplary physicians, but also more than one for whom my memory of Klotz provided a creepy prototype. I never fathomed Klotz's need to chasten those whom he conceived to be sexual hoodlums among all the miserable, unwell marines who showed up for his help. I wasn't alone among these miscreants. Was it religion (as Winkler had hinted) that gave him his hangup, some narrow faith that had provided him with a view of sex that was as fastidious as it was harsh? Perhaps, as Winkler also suggested without contradiction, it wasn't religion so much as that "personal fixation." If that was true, it was a fixation animated by cruelty. Nothing else would account for his failure to tell me from the outset that there was a possibility that I didn't have syphilis at all.

Several days after I received the letter from my stepmother, I was summoned to the end of the ward by Winkler, who led me into the tiny office of Klotz's second-in-command. Everyone called him Chief. He was a chief pharmacist's mate named Moss, a sandy-haired, overweight Georgian with a smoker's hack, good-heartedness written all over him. As in the past, he put me quickly at ease. He was an old man by my standards, probably thirty-five, or older. I had come to trust and respect most of the medical corpsmen, like Moss and Winkler, who held out to sick marines a kind of spontaneous sympathy beyond the capacity of the doctors, or at least of the doctors I knew. And the feeling I had for Moss was not so tepid as mere respect; it was more like awe, for the year before he had taken part in the bloody landing at Tarawa, that slaughterhouse beyond compare, and there he had risked his big ass to save the lives of more than one marine, winning a commendation in the process. Marines and sailors were traditionally hostile to each other, but one could only regard someone like Moss with admiration, or even love, as I think I did that day. A couple of times before, he'd come by my sack to chat, always cheery and plainly eager to calm my fear, a good ol' boy from Valdosta, a bearlike, rather untidy guy, who plainly conceived medicine to be a tender enterprise not entirely bound by technology. He told me that Lieutenant Commander Klotz had departed on Christmas leave but had left him instructions about my case. My case, in fact, was contained in a file on Moss's desk, and he said he wanted to talk to me about it.

First off, I didn't have syphilis.

I recall thinking, despite my apostasy, of Revelation: "*He that overcometh shall inherit all things . . .*"

"I had a talk on the phone with the chief dental officer," Moss said. "He told me what he told Dr. Klotz. Your Vincent's disease cleared up almost immediately. Just a couple of old-fashioned applications of gentian violet. Smile for me, boy."

I smiled widely, a big, shit-eating grin, and Moss heaved with laughter. "Damned if you don't look like a Ubangi. Gentian violet. That old standby. The man who could find a way to get the violet out of gentian violet would make him some money."

"Tell me something, Chief," I said as Moss motioned me to sit down. "If I get the situation correctly, my Kahn test has gone to negative. Zero. If this is true, and I guess it is, what's the connection?"

"Let me ask you a question," said Moss. "Did you ever have this condition—it's also called trench mouth—anytime before?"

I reflected for an instant, then said, "Yes, I believe I did, come to think about it. Up at Duke. There were these marines for a while—I was one of them—complaining about this inflammation in the mouth, and bleeding. I had it badly for some time, then it seemed to go away. I didn't think about it anymore. There was talk about it being spread by the unclean water we used to wash our trays in the mess hall. So tell me, Chief, what's the connection?"

Moss patiently explained to me what appeared to be the reason for Klotz's misdiagnosis, and what in fact had been behind the entire fiasco. He said that Klotz, after receiving the dental report, had written in my record book, "Dentist discharged patient for his Vincent's." That morning, Moss, out of curiosity, had followed up on this notation, checking out various venereal-disease manuals and textbooks for further enlightenment, and had discovered that the principal causes for false serological positives in the Kahn test were leprosy and yaws. (Jesus, I thought, leprosy and yaws!) There was no chance of my having acquired either of those exotic, largely hot-climate diseases, Moss went on. Klotz must have ruled them out all along, convinced (or, I thought, wanting to be convinced) that I had syphilis in a more or less advanced form. Moss said that Vincent's disease was mentioned as a possible cause, but a rare one—so rare that Klotz must have discounted it. I learned from Moss that despite Vincent's preposterously gruesome official name—acute necrotizing ulcerative gingivitis—the inflammation of the mouth itself was relatively mild and easy to treat, often with a single application of the powerful bactericide gentian violet to the gums. One of the causative organisms in Vincent's was another busy little spirochete (Moss spelled it out, *Treponema vincentii*), and it had shown up in my blood tests. With me there had been a recurrence of symptoms. "It's a good thing you finally went to the dentist," Moss concluded, "or you might have been here forever."

As much as I felt a friend and ally in the Chief, I still hesitated to state my case against Klotz, upon whom my rage and loathing grew more grimly focussed, if that was possible, at every item Moss disclosed. I didn't want to strain the rapport I had with Moss by attacking his superior—for all I knew, though only God would know why, he might hold Klotz in high esteem. At the same time, the evil suspicions that sprang to mind as Moss murmured his litany of details had actually begun to make me a little nauseated, taking the glow off my euphoria, and there was no way I could let the suspicions rest. I said, "You know, Chief, he wanted to find the worst things. I guess I was too intimidated to tell him I've had that little scar on my dick all my life." Then I said, "Anyway, what this means is that Dr. Klotz could have told me there was a possibility of a false positive. A possibility." I paused. "But he didn't do that."

"That's really right." Moss didn't wait an extra beat, uttering the words with a soft, rising inflection that had a distinct edge of contempt and carried its own conviction of wrongdoing. I knew then that he was on my side.

"He's read what you've read," I persisted. "He knew about Vincent's disease. He could have run me through that drill, couldn't he? But he didn't do that, either. He could have spared me a lot of misery. He could have given me some hope—"

"That's really right."

"What is this jerk's problem, Chief?"

Klotz was on leave. Within a few hours I would return to the barracks and the drill field, just another healthy recruit thrust back into the maw of the war machine. I would never see the Chief again. Under the circumstances, it would be safe for Moss to give voice to whatever innermost feelings he had toward Klotz. But Moss was too much the wise old salt, too professional and, doubtless, too loyal to an honorable code to go that far. Still, I sensed a comradely affinity, and it was denunciation enough, a spiritual handclasp, when he squinted at me and said, "He was punishin' you, boy, punishin' you."

As I left the hospital that day, I looked forward to the ordeal that my phantom illness had interrupted. Mean corporals with taut shiny scalps and bulging eyes would be at me again, poking their swagger sticks into my solar plexus, ramming their knees up my butt, calling me a cocksucker and a motherfucking sack of shit, terrorizing me with threats and drenching me with spittle and hatred, making my quotidian world such a miasma of fright that each night I would crawl into my bed like an invalid seeking death, praying for resurrection in another life. After that, there was the bloody Pacific, where I would murder and perhaps be murdered. But those were horrors I could deal with; in that gray ward I was nearly broken by fears that were beyond imagining.

Late that afternoon, I trudged past the drill field in the waning light, packing my seabag on my shoulder, hefting a load that seemed pounds lighter than it had a month before. At the far end of the field, a platoon of marines was tramping across the asphalt, counting in cadence, a chorus of young voices over which one voice, the drill instructor's, soared in a high maniacal wail. In some undiscoverable distance, faint yet clear, a band played "The Colonel Bogey March," that jauntily sad evocation of warfare, its brassy harmonies mingling triumph and grief. The music made me walk along with a brisk step, and I felt it hurrying me toward a future where though suffering was a certainty, it wore a recognizable face.

I had just enough time for a stop at the PX, to stock up on cigarettes and candy bars. The candy was a clandestine indulgence I felt I owed myself, and couldn't resist. Nor could I resist, along with the Baby Ruths, buying a postcard showing a photograph of marines grinning insincerely as they performed calisthenics, and the caption "Greetings from Parris Island." Toward Christmas I addressed it to my stepmother, and scribbled:

> Dear Old Girl,
>
> My frantic, obsessive copulations produced not syphilis but trench mouth. (Escaped from the Clap Shack in time to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior.)
>
> Much love, Bill. ◆

LIFE AND LETTERS

LAST OF THE RED HOTS

In Ben Bradlee's new memoir of his years at the Washington Post, he recounts what it took to make a bad newspaper great. Is there any chance of anyone letting something like that happen today?

BY DAVID REMNICK

WHEN I arrived at the Washington *Post*, fourteen years ago, in that amphibious state of semi-employment known as a summer interne, Ben Bradlee, the executive editor, was suffering from wounds inflicted on the paper by a young woman named Janet Cooke. Bradlee is the very model of the devil-may-care Wasp—his entertaining new memoir, "A Good Life: Newspapering and Other Adventures" (Simon & Schuster; $27.50), gives the lie to Socrates' idea that the unexamined life is not worth living—but it was clear then, in the summer of 1981, that he had seen a life's work nearly destroyed by a rookie reporter he had hardly known. Suddenly, the editor-knight of Watergate, the one newspaperman routinely compared to Errol Flynn, was off his feet.

Cooke, it will be recalled, was a young reporter of considerable potential, and even greater duplicity. Determined to make her mark and make it quickly, she wrote a story about "Jimmy," a "precocious little boy with sandy hair, velvety brown eyes and needle marks freckling the baby-smooth skin of his thin brown arms." Cooke's profile of a child heroin addict, entitled "Jimmy's World," ran on the front page on Sunday, September 28, 1980. The article, so shocking then in its premise, stunned the city; Marion Barry, having arrived at his mountebank stage as mayor, assured the populace that young Jimmy was known to the city and was under treatment. The following April, Cooke's worst and most private fears were realized. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

"Jimmy," it turned out, was a fake, from his hair to his toes. Other papers of stature have committed similar errors—the *Times Magazine*, not long afterward, printed an "account" of Pol Pot's rebels in Cambodia by a freelancer who never left his house in Spain and lifted a chunk of Malraux's "The Royal Way" when his own prose failed him—but only the *Post* had won a Pulitzer for a fabrication. Receiving the award, of course, raised the level of embarrassment considerably. Bradlee returned the prize, ushered Cooke into oblivion, and then endured the Schadenfreude of peers who had been green of soul ever since Jason Robards played the editor's role with uncanny brio in "All the President's Men." The sin of newspaper people is almost invariably the sin of envy, and so Bradlee's fall was for many members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors an especially piquant bit of justice.

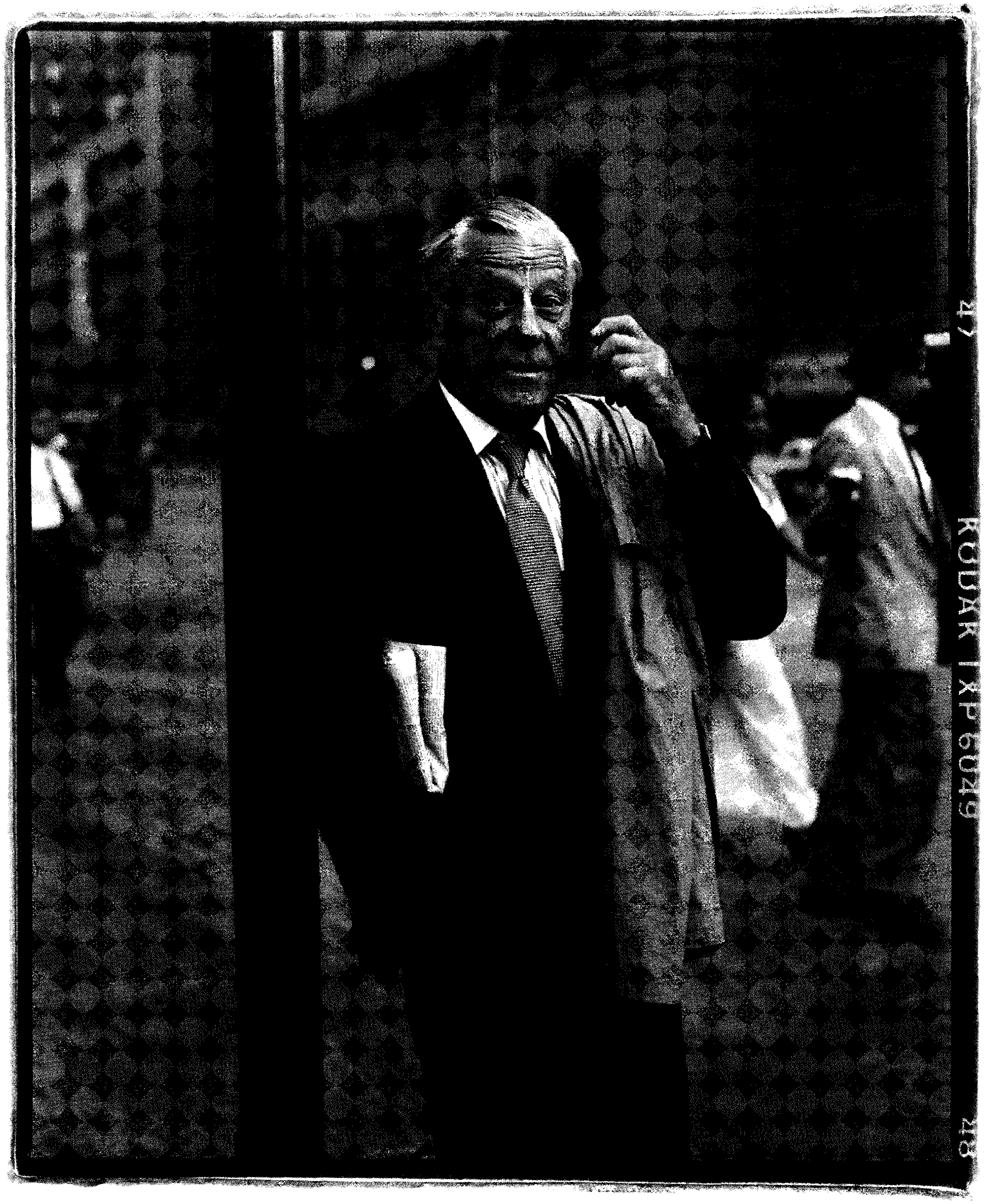
Bradlee reacted to this colossal institutional failure by assigning the *Post's* in-house ombudsman, Bill Green, to write an account of just how such a thing could have happened. In a business crippled by self-righteousness, Green produced a fourteen-thousand-word article that was an exception; it was pitiless, independent, and complete. In Green's report, racial politics, personal vanity, bureaucratic miscues, and, above all, Cooke's incredible talent for deception conspired in the disaster. The paper, run mainly by white liberals, yearned to promote a young black reporter and her seemingly authentic dispatch from across the Anacostia River. Green was unsparing in his criticism. Bob Woodward, who had been running the Metro section with an eye out for what he called "holy-shit stories," and Milton Coleman, who, as the city editor, had been in direct charge of Cooke, endured brutal scrutiny.

As editors do dozens of times every day, Bradlee had trusted a young reporter, and Cooke, as it turned out, had duped him from the moment she came calling, armed with a résumé (Vassar College, magna cum laude; speaks two foreign languages fluently, etc.) that was no less a pipe-job than "Jimmy's World." Her letter, Bradlee writes in his memoir, "stood out because she produced clips that showed she could write like a dream; she had top-drawer college credentials; and she was black. The answer to a modern editor's prayers."

Cooke had succeeded where Nixon & Company had failed. She laid Bradlee low with a direct hit to his most celebrated organ: his instincts. Since he came over to the paper from *Newsweek*, in 1965—he had told Katharine Graham at lunch that he would give his "left one" to be managing editor—Bradlee had guided the *Post* with the most exquisitely tuned set of nerve endings in the business. Possessed of a mind not much cluttered with rumination, he had a talent for forceful and uncanny judgment. He had arrived at a mediocre paper and, with Katharine Graham's money and support, had made it great: it is still the only real competitor of the *Times*. He not only made the right decisions (to urge Graham to print the Pentagon Papers, in 1971; to back "the kids," Woodward and Bernstein, during Watergate) but made them almost instantly, from his gut. Bradlee had standards and principles and, above all, instincts; it seemed he was constitutionally incapable of letting the *Post* down.

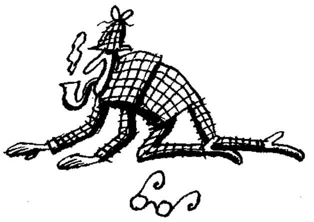
But something had gone wrong: Daddy, it turned out, was not perfect. Faced with the doubts of some of his own staff, he had waved them aside and

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNIE LEIBOVITZ



Among the pleasures of Bradlee's memoir are the moments of self-recognition and warning. Watergate established the Post as dangerous, but it also fixed the paper as a leading player in the capital—and therefore, paradoxically, as a member of the establishment.

submitted "Jimmy's World" for the big prize. As they used to say at the *Post*, "In for a dime, in for a dollar." Like the famous donors at Leonard Bernstein's fund-raiser for the Black Panthers, Bradlee had too much faith in his sense of the authentic even to question that fraud might appear in his midst. "To me, the story reeked of the sights and sounds and smells that editors love to give their readers," Bradlee writes. "The possibility that the story was not true never entered my head. After the fact, some reporters, particularly Courtland Milloy, a streetwise black reporter, told me that they had questioned the story. Milloy had taken Cooke in his car to look for Jimmy's house. When she couldn't find it, he shared his doubts with Milton Coleman. . . . Coleman told others he thought Milloy was jealous." Bradlee wanted to believe Cooke's résumé, and he wanted to believe her story; he had lost, if only for a moment, his instinct for skepticism, his bullshit meter.



That misbegotten summer, I arrived at the *Post's* offices, on Fifteenth Street, and tried to pick out a route through the newsroom to my desk which would somehow afford me a view of Bradlee's office. He had designed the newsroom so that he could see his reporters and—what was at least as important—the reporters could see him; he faced out on his charges through a glass wall. Such was his sense of theatre. For my part, I looked at him with the awe of a kid gazing at the blue whale at the American Museum of Natural History. He was, and still is, a magnificent sight, with slick silver hair, half-glasses on a cord, an Audenesque spray of wrinkles, and those over-the-top broad-striped Turnbull & Asser shirts with white collars, which all the other editors began wearing to show their allegiance. With the newsroom still quiet, he plowed his way through the morning papers, then through the *Times* crossword puzzle (having first clipped out and discarded the grid, to make it harder). His feet were on the desk—the same jaunty pose that Robards had picked up for the movie—but he looked tired, close to beaten. Even an interne could see that.

The fact is, though, that Bradlee was not beaten, nor was the paper. Of all Bradlee's enduring contributions, perhaps the greatest was that he had finally made the *Post* strong enough to endure a crisis as painful as the Janet Cooke affair. He had built an institution—one of the strongest—in an anti-institutional age.

It is typical of Bradlee's life that just when he begins to search for a title for his memoir a friend (in this case, David Halberstam) comes along and hands him the perfect one. "A Good Life." None better. It must have been a gas to live it.

Bradlee is a lucky man; above all, he is lucky in his friendships. He has led such a charmed existence that even when he tries to enter the age of Oprah and Barbara and agonize a little in public about, say, one of his divorces, he can hardly contain his good cheer. Everything works out for the best. A former wife finds exactly "the right man" lickety-split, and the temporarily bitter son ends up just fine and working in the newspaper business. Bradlee does not pause to brood. In the newsroom, he was known to be a master of the minute-long conversation, coasting through the sea of desks like Nimitz on the poop, and woe to the numbskull who would detain him long. He was always moving, working the room. If he stopped to talk to you, you were golden; if not, you were meat. And then he was off. Even after great personal stress, he writes, "I put my nose down, and my ass up, and start driving toward the next goal." Bradlee is the picture of mental health. He admits to having paid for the services of five psychiatrists in his life, and one can only despair for the shrinks. (Bradlee declares one "an asshole" and pays scant homage to the rest.) The poor doctors had nothing to work with. "Nothing profound; nothing radical," he writes. "I was neither."

As it happens, Bradlee is well aware of his luck, and has the good grace to spare us any mitigating details. His may be the least complaining memoir since "Yes I Can," the story of Sammy Davis, Jr. Bradlee survived polio as a schoolboy, three years on a destroyer in the Pacific war as a young man, and a youthful stint on the shady side of Beacon Street. He grew up in the world of Robert Lowell—of Mayflower descendants and bankers and salt air—but without Lowell's self-consciousness. He prepped at St. Mark's and (more or less) studied at Harvard, which Bradlees had been attending since the eighteenth century. The only Jew Bradlee had ever met before college was a family friend, Walter Lippmann (who himself would not have known a sukkah if it had collapsed on his bean). Bradlee wound up as a cub reporter at the Washington *Post* after the war only after he blew off an interview at the Baltimore *Sun* because it was raining too hard that day. Just months after he moved to N Street in Georgetown, it chanced that John and Jacqueline Kennedy moved in a few houses away. The families met over the prams in the neighborhood; not long afterward, Bradlee had a pretty good source in the Oval Office (though not nearly as good as he believed).

In his foreword, Bradlee says that, as the son of a proper (if somewhat fallen) Boston family, he had been "trained from birth not to talk about family, money, or sex." The truth is that Bradlee appealed to and awed his contemporaries for precisely those reasons: family, money, and sex. In a newsroom filled with schleppers and strivers, he was an aristocrat of the old sort—that is, he betrayed no envy or embarrassment. There were a few people in the newsroom with money (one reporter's grandfather popularized the sugar cone, and another was heir to a newspaper chain), but only Bradlee carried himself with the ease of the moneyed. The fact is, he is not shy about money. He is the only newspaper editor I know of whose house (a two-and-a-half-million-dollar manse in Georgetown) and country retreats (the refurbished Grey Gardens in East Hampton and a spectacular manor house in rural Maryland) have all been featured in *Architectural Digest* or *House & Garden*. He is also the only editor who, even in his sixties, made women blush and men straighten their posture. Robards came close to matching the physical appeal: the chesty walk and muscled forearms, the schist-caught-in-the-cement-mixer voice. But he did not exceed it.

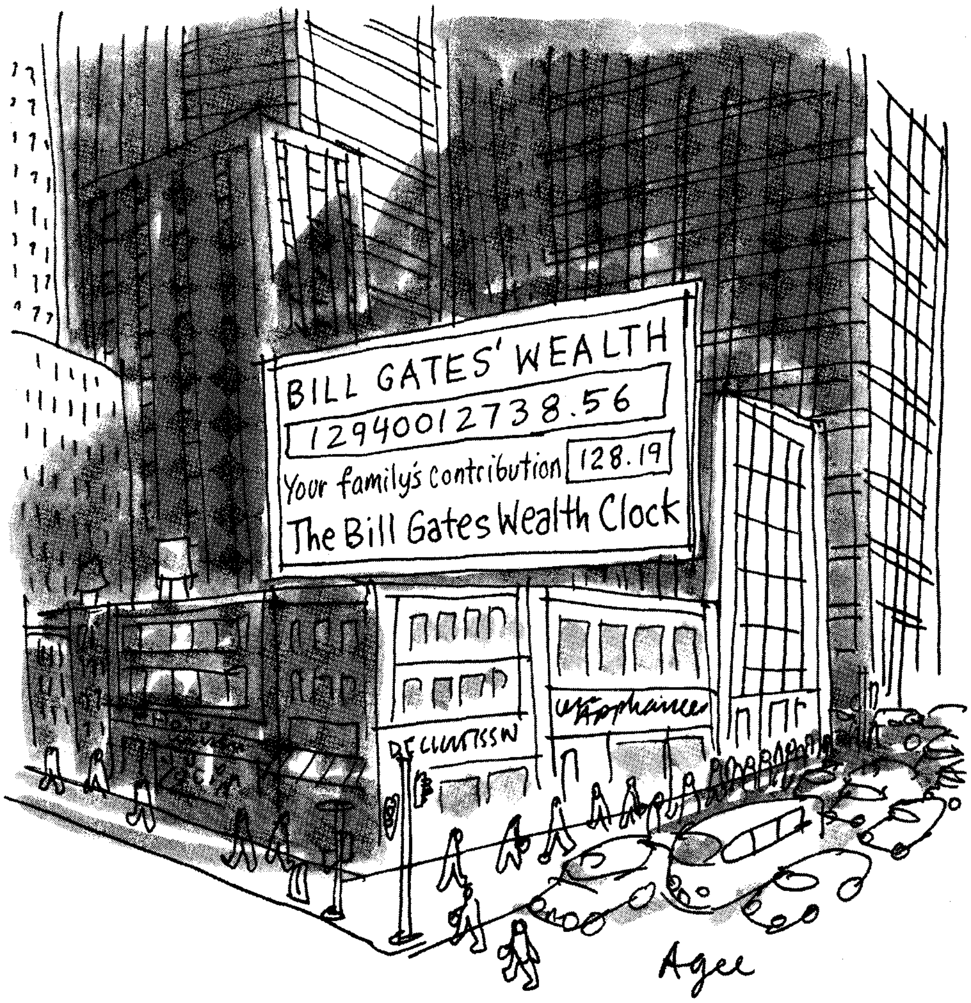
There really is something of the movie star in Bradlee—he is lit up from inside, like neon—and there are times in his book when he affects the style of the Hollywood memoir: breezy, whiz-bang, quick to be magnanimous. Bradlee, who will surely live (and I mean *live*) to a hundred and fifty, seems oddly eager to pay homage even to those he could hardly stand, the better to get into Heaven. Every name comes to him with its complimentary epithet: "the fabulous Sara Metin" (his sexy childhood governess); "the great Jack Barnaby" (his squash coach); "the great Paris doctor, Jean Dax" (his friend); "my secretary was the spectacular Marie-Thérèse Barreau"; "lunches, for me, often started at the Crillon Bar across the street from the embassy, where the great Sam White was more or less permanently installed at one corner"; "and then there was Bernard Valery, the joyous and resourceful correspondent of the New York *Daily News*." In fact, there are moments when Bradlee's offhand good fortune is just mind-boggling: he takes jitterbug lessons from a Sulzberger; his engagement ring was "made for me by my pal René Tupin, managing partner of Cartier, and a fellow member of an eating club called Bistro Anonyme"; he meets "the legendary Vincent Astor, the tall, leonine, multi-millionaire head of the famous Astor family, then in his late sixties, ailing and childless."

Of all Bradlee's friendships, none meant more to his career or added more to his glamour than that with John Kennedy. And "A Good Life," unlike his first book, "Conversations with Kennedy" (1975), is better prepared to make sense of that relationship and that complicated man. Let me be the thousandth person to say that Bradlee and Kennedy were, as types, much the same. If Bradlee had been President, he would have been much like Kennedy: without ideology, mindful of style, reliant on expert elders, intelligent but hardly intellectual, long on vision and wit, short on temper and attention span. And Kennedy, who followed the press and its actors obsessively, would have been Bradlee-esque in a newsroom: excited by stories that broke news and balls, bored by "process stories"—what Bradlee calls "room emptiers." There were surely differences between the two men—for starters, their Boston status was different, Bradlee coming from the hive of Wasps, Kennedy from lace-curtain Irish Catholics—but they shared a sense of privilege and fortune; they shared Harvard, the war, and an understanding of class; and they shared a penchant for gossip, detachment, irony, and courage.

Bradlee's friendship with and access to the President are something almost unthinkable today. Bradlee cannot quite bring himself to say so in his book, but I doubt whether he would have let one of his reporters cover a friend who had made it to the White House. But at *Newsweek* he pretty much owned his friend and neighbor. "Little by little, it was accepted by the rest of the *Newsweek* Bureau [in Washington] and by [the editors in] New York that Kennedy was mine." On the night of the West Virginia primary, the Kennedys and the Bradlees went to see a porno movie—"a nasty thing" called "Private Property" and "starring one Katie Manx as a horny housewife." Imagine the uproar today.

Bradlee and Kennedy were not fools. They both knew that each was capable of using the other, and yet they both enjoyed the duet. They were young and were playing the headiest, most irresistible game there is. In February of 1962, Kennedy pulled Bradlee off the dance floor at the White House and gave him a scoop: "Francis Gary Powers, the pilot of the CIA's U-2 spy plane, which had been shot down by the Russians nine months before, had been swapped for Rudolph Abel, a colonel in the Soviet intelligence agency." Bradlee couldn't get the story in to *Newsweek* in time—it was too late in the week to change a cover—but he did dictate it to his "sister" publication, the *Post*. "A moment from another world!" Bradlee writes. "Imagine a reporter dictating an exclusive story, a lead story, sourced from the President of the United States, from a telephone just off a White House dance floor to the strains of Lester Lanin's dance band. It was the kind of moment that made Kennedy nervous about me, and me nervous about my relationship with him. It now seems also a risky thing for the President to have done. But I was not nervous enough to sacrifice the professional challenge and thrill." Distant days, the days of access as a privilege of a journalist's luck or labor.

After the assassination, in 1963, Bradlee and his wife at the time, Tony Pinchot, spent a couple of "emotional weekends" with Jacqueline Kennedy at the Kennedy estate in Virginia. Already, the relationship seemed to be unravelling. "Too soon and too emotional for healing, we proved only that the three of us had very little in common without the essential fourth,"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Bradlee writes. A couple of weeks later, Bradlee received a note:

> Dear Tony and Ben:
>
> Something that you said in the country stunned me so—that you hoped I would marry again.
>
> You were close to us so many times. There is one thing that you must know. I consider that my life is over and I will spend the rest of it waiting for it really to be over.
>
> With my love,
> Jackie

Bradlee learned a devastating lesson in his relationship with the Kennedys. For all his seeming intimacy with Kennedy, Bradlee not only did not know the extent of Kennedy's womanizing but also had no idea that the list of mistresses included a mobster's moll and his own wife's sister, Mary Pinchot Meyer. When Meyer was found murdered in Georgetown, in 1964, Bradlee was deputized to go looking for her diaries. Once more, the journalist finds his personal life intersecting with Washington politics, and once more he reveals himself as a friend of establishment figures—a naïf, amazingly enough. When he goes to Meyer's house to look for the diaries—a document that would reveal the news of her love affair with J.F.K.—he bumps into another searcher, one of the shadowiest figures in the history of the Central Intelligence Agency. "Now, James Jesus Angleton was a lot of things, including an extremely controversial, high-ranking CIA official specializing in counterintelligence, but he was also a friend of ours, and the husband of Mary Meyer's close friend, Cicely Angleton," Bradlee writes. "We asked him how he'd gotten into the house, and he shuffled his feet. . . . We felt his presence was odd, to say the least, but took him at his word, and with him we searched Mary's house thoroughly." Eventually, Tony Bradlee gave the diary to Angleton, Bradlee writes, "because he promised to destroy it in whatever facilities the Central Intelligence Agency had for the destruction of documents. It was naïve of us, but we figured they were state of the art, and we got on with the business of mourning and memorializing."

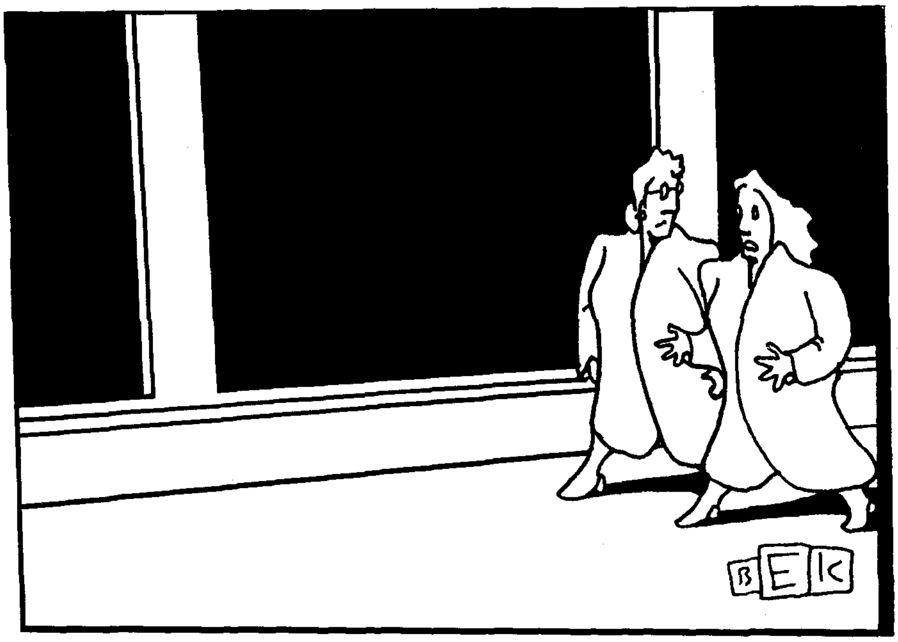
Bradlee here is innately trusting of old-boy institutions and the men who ran them. He trusted Angleton to burn the diaries—and, of course, Angleton did not. Nor did Bradlee turn over the news of Meyer's liaison to *Newsweek*. "It is important to say that I never for a minute considered reporting that it had been learned that the slain president had in fact had a lover, who had herself been murdered while walking on the C&O Canal. . . . Mary Meyer's murder was news, not her past love affair, I thought then, and part of me would like to think so now." He helped the *Post* on the story of the love affair in 1976, and then only after the *National Enquirer* had published its own account.

Bradlee was in for another kind of shock after he published "Conversations with Kennedy." While some reviewers found it treacly (even Bradlee's greatest admirers in the newsroom wondered why he was still so loyal to the mythologized Kennedy), Jacqueline pronounced it unworthy, saying that the salty language would offend her children and, besides, "it tells more about you than it does about the President." She never spoke to Bradlee again.

AT *Newsweek*, Bradlee had been an average, if high-profile, reporter, an ordinary writer. ("Port Said is now an ugly, festering sore on the mouth of the Suez Canal.") But upon his arrival at the *Post* Bradlee, having promised Katharine Graham no small part of his anatomy, became a genius of an editor. Nothing unprecedented here: Angelo Dundee couldn't much fight; Vince Lombardi was an unspectacular bruiser at Fordham. Generalship is not about fighting the battle; it's about inspiring the enlisted.

To understand the scale of Bradlee's achievement, it is important to know something about the mediocrity with which he began. The Washington *Post* in 1965 not only had no claim to rivalry with the New York *Times* but could not even claim to be the best paper in its city. Ever since the *Post* bought out the *Times-Herald*, in 1954, it had been profitable, but as an editorial enterprise it still was simply not competitive. It was, like most newspapers everywhere, pretty awful. In the capital, the *Star*, an afternoon broadsheet, was still supreme (though it was starting its slide). When Bradlee was hired as managing editor, the *Post's* editorial budget was four million dollars, compared with twenty million at the *Times*. The *Post*, the saying went, did not cover stories outside the second taxi zone. The *Post* had one foreign correspondent—Murrey Marder. The *Times* had a few dozen. The *Post's* Pentagon correspondent looked at other reporters' carbons to get stories; he was known as Black Sheet Jack. The one-man business department, S. Oliver Goodman, produced a column called "Business Notes," for which he rewrote the first paragraph of every press release

"Mind if I smoke?"



"I want to be saved, but at the same time I want to be spent."

he could get his hands on. In the afternoon, he and a part-time copyboy punched in the agate type for the stock page. Bradlee, in his first tours of the office, wondered aloud why the night managing editor went home at nine, and he was informed that the night managing editor was of the opinion that nothing much ever happened past nine. The *Post* did have Herblock, who is even now, in his eighties, the sharpest political cartoonist in newspapers, and it had one of the greatest sports columnists ever—Shirley Povich. And the editorial writers, especially Alan Barth, had a gift for decency, if you like that sort of thing. That was about it. The reputation of the paper was distinctly lightweight. Before Bradlee arrived, the *Post* itself had never won a Pulitzer.

To no one's surprise, Bradlee proved a ferocious office politician, and, since his newsroom competition was so weak and his relationship with Katharine Graham so strong (the Kay card, it was called), he wrested control of the paper in no time flat. At the stately *Times*, such maneuvering would have required decades. Bradlee found that the *Post* was filled with deadwood, and he set about reducing it to chips. When staff meetings ended, at least a few staffers usually left with an exit ticket. Ben Gilbert, the city editor and a Bradlee un-favorite, was suddenly appointed to a job with no description and even less importance. Exit Gilbert.

At the same time, Bradlee was trying to find ways to go big time—to compete with the New York *Times*, especially in Washington, where the *Times* comported itself more like an embassy than like a news bureau. Bradlee mastered the low art of budgeting and the high art of getting the publisher to increase it. He hired young and not quite young reporters who loved his sense of adventure: Ward Just, who became the *Post's* one real star in Vietnam; David Broder, who bolted the *Times* to lead political coverage at the *Post;* Hobart Rowen, who brought some sophistication to the *Post's* coverage of economics; Don Oberdorfer, who became the city's leading diplomatic correspondent. Bradlee also helped make stars of Richard Harwood, Stanley Karnow, and Nicholas von Hoffman. And, besides covering official "white" Washington in greater depth, the *Post* discovered black Washington, jettisoned some older, racist editors, and hired talented black reporters, including Robert Maynard. Foreign bureaus opened in Paris, Moscow, Saigon, Bonn, and Tokyo. Moreover, with the help of a brilliant managing editor, Howard Simons, the *Post* discovered what they called SMERSH: science, medicine, education, religion, and all that shit.

It is to Bradlee's credit that he admits having come in very late to his first great story: Vietnam. While Ward Just's vivid battlefield reports went a long way toward saving the paper from mediocrity on the war, the coverage by the *Times* and the two wires, A.P. and U.P.I., was far more distinguished. Bradlee was a kind of Roger Baldwin–A.C.L.U. liberal, but he had also been shaped by his years in the Navy and was deeply suspicious of the antiwar movement. He recounts his own trip to Vietnam, in 1971, and says he ended up feeling "uncommitted politically as usual." His analysis is not exactly distinguished: "By instinct and habit, I was more interested in the whatness of the war than in the rightness or wrongness. I hated the idea that an authoritarian country like North Vietnam could wipe out a peaceful neighbor. But I didn't much like the idea that a corrupt country like South Vietnam in one hemisphere could be persuaded to ask the United States of America and millions of its citizen soldiers to come to its rescue, with never even an attempt to enact a declaration of war."

Bradlee's achievement had nothing to do with his insight as a commentator. He had none, pretended to none. But that same year, when Neil Sheehan got a copy of the Pentagon Papers from Daniel Ellsberg, and the *Times* began to run excerpts, Bradlee knew what to do. His paper was ready, and so was he: his instincts finally kicked in. With the *Times* in trouble with the courts and forced to suspend publication of the Papers after three installments, Bradlee's national editor, Ben Bagdikian, got hold of another copy of the Papers. The *Post* had hours in which to assemble what had taken the *Times* many weeks, and while his top reporters tried to make sense of the Papers, Bradlee was on the phone to Katharine Graham, urging her once more to get into the game; against the advice of her lawyers, she did just that. ("God bless her ballsy soul.")

For the *Times*, the Pentagon Papers was a great beat; for the *Post*, it established for the first time an institution—a rival to the *Times*. Running the Pentagon Papers gave the *Post* the standing to begin its Watergate investigations the next year and the nerve to stay with them. Bradlee, a man of the establishment, had created a paper capable of playing in the biggest arena without bowing to the intimidation of the Attorney General or the Pentagon. He does not say so, but it seems that he had come a very long way since his cozy relationship with the Kennedy White House. Early in the Watergate story, Bradlee got a reward from one of the hoariest of the Washington Brahmins, Clark Clifford: he came on the phone "in that dramatic, triple-breasted basso profundo of his" saying, "Mr. Bradlee, I would like to tell you something. I woke up this morning, put on my bathrobe and my slippers, went downstairs slowly, opened the front door carefully, and there it was. The sun was already shining. It was going to be a beautiful day. And I looked up to the heavens, and said, 'Thank God for the Washington *Post*.' "

On the day of Bradlee's retirement party in the *Post* newsroom, four years ago, many stories were told about the latter-day Ben, the lovably crusty figure of journalism folklore. I especially liked a story about how one day Bradlee's secretary ("the fabulous Debbie Regan") approached the house grammarian, Tom Lippman, with a worried look on her face. It seems she had been typing letters from Bradlee's dictation and she was vexed. "Look, I have to ask you something," she said. "Is 'dickhead' one word or two?"

But of all the speeches made that day the one that was most memorable came from Meg Greenfield, the editorial-page editor. According to newsroom lore, Bradlee and Greenfield—the two top names on the masthead under the executives'—had a prickly relationship at times. (She is cerebral, given to reading history and Latin. He is not.) And yet Greenfield, nervous in front of the crowd and clearly filled with the sadness of the moment, paid precise tribute to Bradlee. What Ben had done, she said, was to make the Washington *Post* dangerous to the powerful, the dishonest, and the deceitful.

September
To

The champions of democracy, office-holders and voters alike, are not unanimous in their adoration of dangerous newspapers. Nor are newspaper owners. The Clintons long ago soured on an aggressive press. Clinton's likeliest rival, the Senate Majority Leader, Bob Dole, is also on record as being ambivalent toward the press. During Watergate, when he was the chairman of the Republican National Committee, Dole gave a speech in Baltimore that outlines some of his reservations:

> The *Post's* reputation for objectivity and credibility have sunk so low they have almost disappeared from the Big Board altogether.
>
> There is a cultural and social affinity between the McGovernites and the *Post* executives and editors. They belong to the same elite; they can be found living cheek by jowl in the same exclusive neighborhood, and hobnobbing at the same Georgetown parties. . . .
>
> It is only the Washington *Post* which deliberately mixes together illegal and unethical episodes, like the Watergate caper, with shenanigans which have been the stock in trade of political pranksters from the day I came into politics.

In his book Bradlee quotes Dole's speech at length. He is right to do so. It is a highlight of a good life. The shame is that so few value the presence of a dangerous paper.

As Hugh Grant walked down his Via Dolorosa last summer, a penitent stopping in at one video confessional after another, the film star made one remark that seemed close to true. On being asked by Larry King if the British press was giving him a tough time, Grant turned solemn critic, saying that in fact all British papers were now tabloids. Including the once venerable broadsheet of broadsheets, the London *Times*. It is not much of a stretch from Rupert Murdoch's *Times* to Rupert Murdoch's *Sun*.

American newspapers are suffering a less glamorous but no less homogenizing kind of doom. With one eye on Wall Street and the other shut tight, newspaper owners everywhere—except for a few, like the Sulzbergers of New York and the Grahams of Washington—are following the path to deadening mediocrity. Everything that cannot be made blandly profitable is killed outright. Spoiled by the wild profits of the eighties, the owners rarely have patience for a more modest yet distinguished future. The *Times* expands in recession; its inferiors brutalize themselves in the name of the Dow Jones averages. As Murray Kempton wrote after the Times Mirror Company's heedless execution of New York *Newsday* in July, "there cannot be much health left in a social order where corporations can clamorously proclaim a failure on Friday with entire assurance that therefore their stock will go up on Monday."

Few cities in the United States have a local newspaper that is preferable to *USA Today*. This is not to say that *USA Today* is a fine newspaper. It is not. It is a sprightly brand of fish wrap. And yet in a growing number of cities and regions newspaper owners have abused their franchise, slashing staff, cutting the "news hole," dropping aggressive reporting, and leaving little behind but wire-service copy, sports, and soft local stories designed to make readers feel all warm and fuzzy and inclined to place a classified ad. Despite its tinny bugle calls to a kind of national school spirit ("WE'RE ALL EATING BAGELS!") and color-keyed news crumbs, *USA Today* often provides a more tolerable reading experience than the local and declining sheet. It's simply depressing to read the San Francisco *Chronicle* or *Examiner*, the Houston *Post*, the Atlanta *Constitution*, the Denver *Post*. Once great and near-great papers in major cities are in retreat. The Miami *Herald*, which used to be a vigorous daily even while constantly losing young talent to the *Times* and the Washington *Post*, has shut down bureaus, and whacked away at its staff, and is now thin and anemic, a booster sheet. The Los Angeles *Times*, the Baltimore *Sun*, and the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, all of which used to thrive on adventure and excess, show signs of decline. The Chicago *Tribune* is a shell in which the hollow carping of Mike Royko rings shrill. The blame for all this goes, in the main, not to the handcuffed journalists (there are still many terrific reporters at these papers) but to the owners, who pocket the key.

Along comes Bradlee's memoir to remind us of what was once so promising and is now endangered. Bradlee, who essentially created the Washington *Post* and guided it through Watergate, the biggest newspaper triumph of our times, probably intended his memoir as a breezy compilation of his greatest anecdotes. Many have already been played out in other books, by Woodward and Bernstein, and in Halberstam's "The Powers That Be." It hardly matters. Bradlee's got a million of 'em.

But there is something sad about hearing Bradlee's joyous voice at this moment. I wonder whether, if a young Ben Bradlee came along today offering his left one, any willing plutocrat would take him up on the offer. The *Post* or the *Times*, each owned by a newspaper family, might, but who else? A Times Mirror paper? A Knight-Ridder paper? Newhouse? Gannett? Who is interested in a "dangerous" editor anymore?

At one point, Bradlee notes that in the ten years immediately following Nixon's fall, in 1974, the number of federal officials convicted of federal crimes rose from forty-three to four hundred and twenty-nine. Shouldn't this be, both for the press and for democracy, cause for pride?

There has been much complaint in recent years about the aggression of the press, but the fact is that most aggression in the press is merely a pose. Sam Donaldson is not an aggressive reporter. He just plays one on TV. To do what the *Post* did during Watergate or to do what the *Times* did during Vietnam requires courage and incredibly hard work. The alternative to aggressive reporting is an unbearable coziness with power.

Among the pleasures of Bradlee's memoir are the moments of self-recognition and warning. Watergate established the *Post* as dangerous, but it also fixed the paper as a leading player in the capital—and therefore, paradoxically, as a member of the establishment. And with that membership "I began to feel subconsciously that what the world did *not* need right away was another investigation that might again threaten the foundations of democracy," Bradlee says. "What the newspaper did *not* need right away was another fight to the finish with another president—especially a Republican president, and especially a successful fight. Without the suggestion of a formal decision, I think the fires of investigative zeal were allowed to bank." The press, including the Washington *Post*, Bradlee concludes, was not fast or deep enough on the savings-and-loan scandals or other highlights of the Reagan-Bush years.

It is also true that Bradlee left some other things undone at the *Post*. His successor, Leonard Downie, Jr., found himself with plenty to do. The financial section has improved only lately. Downie loves "accountability" stories, pieces that show up betrayals of public trust, and there have been many more of those. Although Bradlee wisely trashed the "for and about Women" section and replaced it with a product of the New Journalism years, the Style section, he never managed to build a decent Sunday magazine. The last attempt, in 1986, ended in disaster when the first issue of a very expensive "redo" featured a photograph of a black rap star and accused murderer on the cover, and a column sympathizing with store owners who refuse entry to young black men. The incident left the paper in a defensive crouch. In a city where the black population is intensely suspicious of all white institutions—including the *Post*, a monopoly paper—the magazine crisis only worsened relations.

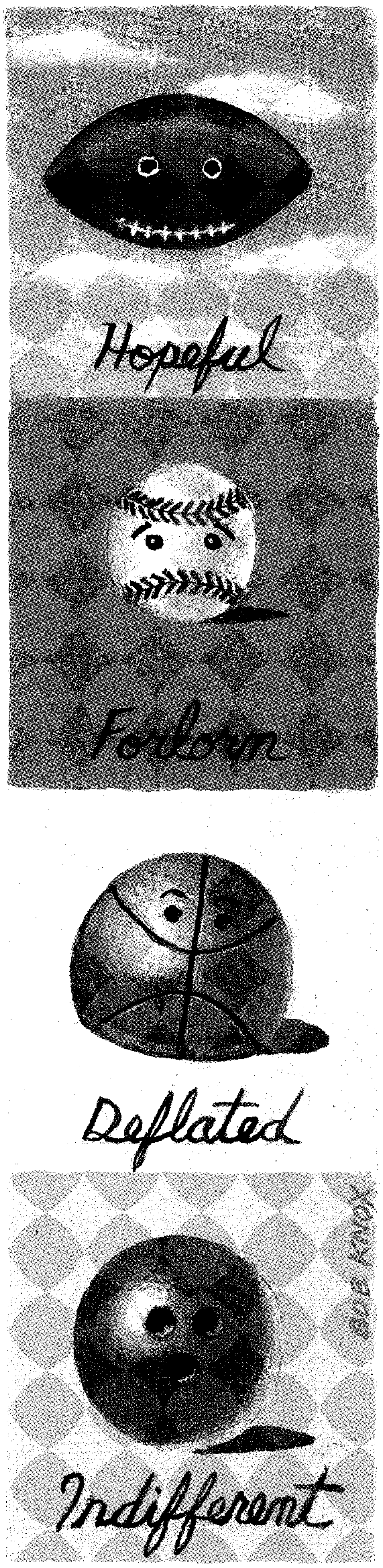
It might have been predicted that the *Post* would face an identity crisis now that Bradlee is a vice-president at large and Katharine Graham has given over nearly all the power at the paper to her oldest son, Donald Graham. The paper is less exciting to read, and its management is more bureaucratic. Although it has by no means set aside investigative reporting, it is sometimes more cautious about printing what it has. The *Post* had the goods on Bob Packwood's chronic tongue thrusting and waist grabbing, yet it waited until three weeks after the elections to run a story.

Len Downie, a fair and intelligent man who has never pretended to compete with Bradlee as a figure of glamour, is both blessed and cursed. He is blessed because he inherited not the *Post* of 1965 but, rather, an institution created by Ben Bradlee—one capable of withstanding occasional catastrophe. The newsroom, which has become middle-aged, is still packed with reporters and editors who learned under Bradlee. Downie is cursed because, like so many modern editors, he must cope with modern problems which are no-win problems—money problems, information-superhighway problems, suburban-penetration problems.

Race is probably the most complicated and the most absorbing problem at the *Post*. Bradlee left the paper, to his immense relief, before having to deal fully with the complications of affirmative action and the era of sensitivity training. Downie, in a well-meaning attempt to diversify the newsroom and bring the paper closer to its city, has gone to great lengths to hire more minorities and generally make the paper more "sensitive."

The result is not always a pretty sight. At one gathering in Florida last year, *Post* editors were instructed by a "diversity consultant" to wear signs around their necks reading "I am stupid" or "I am ignorant," the better to understand the plight of the misunderstood and ignored reporter. At an earlier session, top editors were instructed to climb up on tall boxes that had been assembled in a circle, stand on one leg, and hold hands, the better to understand the concept of teamwork. As the sports editor, George Solomon, was trying to find his balance, he turned to the Style editor, Mary Hadar, and said, "Well, I guess the Bradlee era is really over." ♦

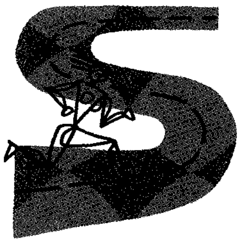
THE CURRENT NEW YORK SPORTS EMOTIONAL INDEX



FICTION

SHE WASN'T SOFT

BY T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE



SHE wasn't tender, she wasn't soft, she wasn't sweetly yielding or coquettish, and she was nobody's little woman and never would be. That had been her mother's role, and look at the sad sack of neuroses and alcoholic dysfunction *she'd* become. And her father. He'd been the pasha of the living room, the sultan of the kitchen, and the emperor of the bedroom, and what had it got him? A stab in the chest, a tender liver, and two feet that might as well have been stumps. Paula Turk wasn't born for that sort of life, with its domestic melodrama and greedy sucking babies—no, she was destined for something richer and more complex, something that would define and elevate her, something great. She wanted to compete and she wanted to win—always shining before her like some numinous icon was the glittering image of triumph. And whenever she flagged, whenever a sniffle or the flu ate at her reserves and she hit the wall in the numbing waters of the Pacific or the devilish winds at the top of San Marcos Pass, she pushed herself through it, drove herself with an internal whip that accepted no excuses and made no allowances for the limitations of the flesh. She was twenty-eight years old and she was going to conquer the world.

On the other hand, Jason Barre, the thirty-three-year-old surf-and-dive-shop proprietor she'd been seeing pretty steadily over the past nine months, didn't really seem to have the fire of competition in him. Both his parents were doctors (and that, as much as anything, had swayed Paula in his favor when they first met), and they'd set him up in his own business, a business that had continuously lost money since its grand opening three years ago. When the waves were breaking, Jason would be at the beach, and when the surf was flat he'd be stationed behind the counter on his tall swivel stool, selling wax remover to bleached-out adolescents who said things like "gnarly" and "killer" in their penetrating, adenoidal tones. Jason liked to surf and he liked to breathe the cigarette haze in sports bars, a permanent sleepy-eyed, widemouthed California grin on his face, flip-flops on his feet, and his waist encircled by a pair of faded baggy shorts barely held in place by the gentle sag of his belly and the twin anchors of his hipbones.

That was all right with Paula. She told him he should quit smoking, cut down on his drinking, but she didn't harp on it. In truth, she really didn't care all that much—one world-beater in a relationship was enough. When she was in training, which was all the time now, she couldn't help feeling a kind of moral superiority to anyone who wasn't—and Jason most emphatically wasn't. He was no threat and he didn't want to be—his mind just didn't work that way. He was cute, that was all, and just as she got a little frisson of pleasure from the swell of his paunch beneath the oversized T-shirt and his sleepy eyes and his laid-back ways, he admired her for her drive and the lean, hard triumph of her beauty and her strength. She never took drugs or alcohol—or hardly ever—but he persuaded her to try just a puff or two of marijuana before they made love, and it seemed to relax her, open up her pores till she could feel her nerve ends poking through them, and their lovemaking was like nothing she'd ever experienced, except maybe breaking the tape at the end of the twenty-six miles of the marathon.

It was a Friday night in August, half past seven, the sun hanging in the window like a piñata, and she'd just stepped out of the shower after a six-hour tuneup for Sunday's triathlon, when the phone rang. Jason's voice came over the wire, low and soft. "Hey, babe," he said, breathing into the phone like a sex maniac. (He always called her "babe," and she loved it, precisely because she wasn't a babe and never would be—it was their little way of mocking the troglodytes molded into the barstools beside him.) "Listen, I was just wondering if you might want to join me down at Clubber's for a while. Yeah, I know, you need your sleep and the big day's the day after tomorrow and Zinny Bauer's probably already asleep, but how about it? Come on. It's my birthday."

"Your birthday? I thought your birthday was in December?"

There was the ghost of a pause during which she could detect the usual wash of background noise, drunken voices crying out as if from the netherworld, the competing announcers of the six different games unfolding simultaneously on the twelve big-screen TVs, the insistent pulse of the jukebox thumping faintly beneath it all. "No," he said, "my birthday's today, August 26th—it is. I don't know where you got the idea it was in December. . . . But come on, babe, don't you have to load up on carbohydrates?"

She did. She admitted it. "I was going to make pancakes and penne," she said, "with a little cheese sauce and maybe a loaf of that brown-and-serve bread. . . ."

"I'll take you to the Pasta Bowl, all you can eat—and I swear I'll have you back by eleven." He lowered his voice. "And no sex, I know—I wouldn't want to drain you or anything."

SHE wasn't soft because she ran forty-five miles a week, biked two hundred and fifty, and slashed through fifteen thousand metres of the crawl in the Baños del Mar pool. She was in the best shape of her life, and Saturday's triathlon was nothing, way less than half the total distance of the big one—the Hawaii Ironman—in October. She wasn't soft because she'd finished second in the women's division last year in Hawaii and forty-fourth over all, beating out a thousand three hundred and fifty other contestants, twelve hundred of whom, give or take a few, were men. Like Jason. Only fitter. A whole lot fitter.

She swung by Clubber's to pick him up—he wasn't driving, not since his last D.U.I., anyway—and, though parking was no problem, she had to endure the

ANDERS WENNGREN

stench of cigarettes and the faint sour odor of yesterday's vomit while he finished his cocktail and wrapped up his ongoing analysis of the Dodgers' chances with an abstract point about a blister on somebody or other's middle finger. The guy they called Little Drake, white-haired at thirty-six and with a face that reminded Paula of one of those naked drooping dogs, leaned out of his Hawaiian shirt and into the radius of Jason's gesticulating hands as if he'd never heard such wisdom in his life. And Paula? She stood there at the bar in her shorts and Lycra halter top, sucking an Evian through a straw while the sports fans furtively admired her pecs and lats and the hard-hammered musculature of her legs, for all the world a babe. She didn't mind. In fact, it made her feel luminous and alive, not to mention vastly superior to all those pale lumps of flesh sprouting out of the corners like toadstools and the sagging abrasive girlfriends who hung on their arms and tried to feign interest in whatever sport happened to be on the tube.

But somebody was talking to her—Little Drake, it was Little Drake, leaning across Jason and addressing her as if she were one of them. "So, Paula," he was saying. "Paula?"

She swivelled her head toward him, hungry now, impatient. She didn't want to hang around the bar and schmooze about Tommy Lasorda and O.J. and Proposition 187 and how Phil Aguirre had broken both legs and his collarbone in the surf at Rincon; she wanted to go to the Pasta Bowl and carbo-load. "Yes?" she said, trying to be civil, for Jason's sake.

"You going to put them to shame on Saturday, or what?"

Jason was snubbing out his cigarette in the ashtray, collecting his money from the bar. They were on their way out the door—in ten minutes she'd be forking up fettuccine or angel hair with black olives and sun-dried tomatoes while Jason regaled her with a satiric portrait of his day and all the crazies who'd passed through his shop. This little man with the white hair didn't require a dissertation, and, besides, he couldn't begin to appreciate the difference between what she was doing and the ritualistic farce of the tobacco-spitting, crotch-grabbing "athletes" all tricked out in their pretty unblemished uniforms up on the screen over his head, so she just smiled, like a babe, and said, "Yeah."

Truly, the race was nothing, just a warmup, and it would have been less than nothing but for the puzzling fact that Zinny Bauer was competing. Zinny was a professional, from Hamburg, and she was the one who'd cranked past Paula like some sort of machine in the final stretch of the Ironman last year. What Paula couldn't fathom was why Zinny was bothering with this small-time event when there were so many other plums out there. On the way out of Clubber's, she mentioned it to Jason. "Not that I'm worried," she said, "just mystified."

It was a fine, soft, glowing night, the air rich with the smell of the surf, the sun squeezing the last light out of the sky as it sank toward Hawaii. Jason was wearing his faded-to-pink 49ers jersey and a pair of shorts so big they made his legs look like sticks. He gave her one of his hooded looks, then got distracted and tapped at his watch twice before lifting it to his ear and frowning. "Damn thing stopped," he said. It wasn't until they were sliding into the car that he came back to the subject of Zinny Bauer. "It's simple, babe," he said, shrugging his shoulders and letting his face go slack. "She's here to psych you out."

He liked to watch her eat. She wasn't shy about it—not like the other girls he'd dated, the ones on a perpetual diet who made you feel like a two-headed hog every time you sat down to a meal, whether it was a Big Mac or the Mexican Plate at La Fondita. No "salad with dressing on the side" for Paula, no butterless bread or child's portions. She attacked her food like a lumberjack, and you'd better keep your hands and fingers clear. Tonight she started with potato gnocchi in a white sauce puddled with butter, and she ate half a loaf of crusty Italian bread with it, sopping up the leftover sauce till the plate gleamed. Next it was the fettuccine with Alfredo sauce, and on her third trip to the pasta bar she heaped her plate with mostaccioli marinara and chunks of hot sausage—and more bread, always more bread.

He ordered a beer, lit a cigarette without thinking, and shovelled up some spaghetti carbonara, thick on the fork and sloppy with sauce. The next thing he knew, he was staring up into the hot green gaze of the waitperson, a pencil-necked little fag he could have snapped in two like a breadstick if this weren't California and everything so copacetic and laid back. It was times like this when he wished he lived in Cleveland, even though he'd never been there, but he knew what was coming and he figured people in Cleveland wouldn't put up with this sort of crap.

"You'll have to put that out," the little fag said.

"Sure, man," Jason said, gesturing broadly so that the smoke fanned out around him like the remains of a pissed-over fire. "Just as soon as I"—puff, puff—"take another drag and"—puff, puff—"find me an ashtray somewhere . . . you wouldn't happen"—puff, puff—"to have an ashtray, would you?"

Of course the little fag had been holding one out in front of him all along, as if it were a portable potty or something, but the cigarette was just a glowing stub now, the tiny fag end of a cigarette—fag end, how about that?—and Jason reached out, crushed the thing in the ashtray and said, "Hey, thanks, dude—even though it really wasn't a cigarette but just the *fag* end of one."

And then the waiter was gone and Paula was there, her fourth plate of the evening mounded high with angel hair, three-bean salad, and wedges of fruit in five different colors. "So what was that all about? Your cigarette?"

Jason ignored her, forking up spaghetti. He took a long swig of his beer and shrugged. "Yeah, whatever," he said finally. "One more fascist doing his job."

"Don't be like that," she said, using the heel of her bread to chase the beans around the plate.

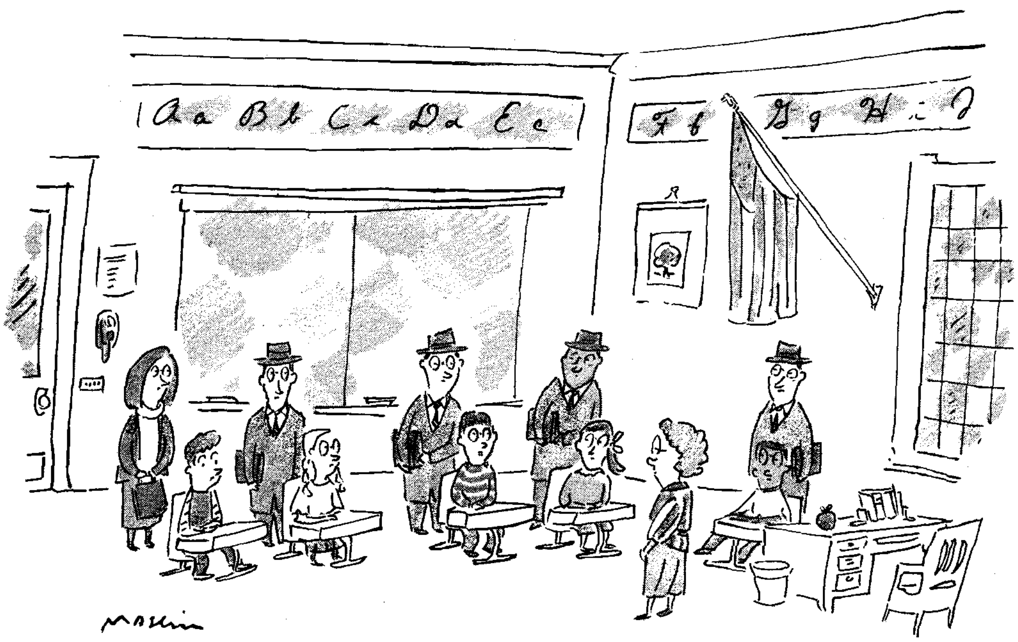
"Like what?"

"You know what I mean. I don't have to lecture you."

"Yeah?" He let his eyes droop. "So what do you call this, then?"

She sighed and looked away, and that sigh really irritated him, rankled him, made him feel like flipping the table over and sailing a few plates through the window. He was drunk. Or three-quarters drunk, anyway. Then her lips were moving again. "Everybody in the world doesn't necessarily enjoy breathing through a tube of incinerated tobacco, you know," she said. "People are into health."

"Who? You maybe. But the rest of them just want to be a pain in the ass. They just want to abrogate my rights in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"Miss Finch, my attorney has advised me that I'm not obligated to address the question of what I did on my summer vacation. Nonetheless, I would like to respond."

• •

a public place"—abrogate, now where did that come from?—"and then rub my nose in it." The thought soured him even more, and when he caught the waitperson pussyfooting by out of the corner of his eye he snapped his fingers with as much pure malice as he could manage. "Hey, dude, another beer here, huh? I mean, when you get a chance."

It was then that Zinny Bauer made her appearance. She stalked through the door like something crossbred in an experimental laboratory, so rangy and hollow-eyed and fleshless she looked as if she'd been pasted onto her bones. There was a guy with her—her trainer or husband or whatever—and he was right out of an X-Men cartoon, all head and shoulders and great big beefy biceps. Jason recognized them from Houston—he'd flown down to watch Paula compete in the Houston race only to see her hit the wall in the run and finish sixth in the women's while Zinny Bauer, the Amazing Bone Woman, took an easy first. And here they were, Zinny and Klaus—or Olaf, or whoever—here in the Pasta Bowl, carbo-loading like anybody else. His beer came, cold and dependable, green in the bottle, pale amber in the glass, and he downed it in two gulps. "Hey, Paula," he said, and he couldn't keep the quick sharp stab of joy out of his voice—he was happy suddenly and he didn't know why. "Hey, Paula, you see who's here?"

THE thing that upset her was that he'd lied to her, the way her father used to lie to her mother, the same way—casually, almost as a reflex. It wasn't his birthday at all. He'd just said that to get her out because he was drunk and he didn't care if she had to compete the day after tomorrow and needed her rest and peace and quiet and absolutely no stimulation whatever. He was selfish, that was all, selfish and unthinking. And then there was the business with the cigarette—he knew as well as anybody in the state that there was an ordinance against smoking in public places as of January last, and still he had to push the limits like some cocky immature chip-on-the-shoulder surfer. Which is exactly what he was. But all that was forgivable—it was the Zinny Bauer business she just couldn't forgive.

Paula wasn't even supposed to be there. She was supposed to be at home, making up a batch of flapjacks and penne with cheese sauce and lying inert on the couch with the remote control. This was the night before the night before the event, a time to fuel up her tanks and veg out. But because of him, because of her silver-tongued hero in the baggy shorts, she was at the Pasta Bowl, carbo-loading in public. And so was Zinny Bauer, the last person on earth she wanted to see.

That was bad enough, but Jason made it worse, far worse—Jason made it into one of the most excruciating moments of her life. What happened was purely crazy, and if she didn't know Jason better she would have thought he'd planned it. They were squabbling over his cigarette and how unlaid-back and uptight the whole thing had made him—he was drunk, and she didn't appreciate him when he was drunk, not at all—when his face suddenly took on a conspiratorial look and he said, "Hey, Paula, you see who's here?"

"Who?" she said, and she shot a glance over her shoulder and froze: it was Zinny Bauer and her husband, Armin. "Oh, shit," she said, and she lowered her head and focussed on her plate as if it were the most fascinating thing she'd ever seen. "She didn't see me, did she? We've got to go. Right now. Right this minute."

Jason was smirking. He looked happy about it, as if he and Zinny Bauer were old friends. "But you've only had four plates, babe," he said. "You sure we got our money's worth? I could go for maybe just a touch more pasta—and I haven't even had any salad yet."

"No joking around, this isn't funny." Her voice withered in her throat. "I don't want to see her. I don't want to talk to her. I just want to get out of here, O.K.?"

His smile got wider. "Sure, babe, I know how you feel—but you're going to beat her, you are, no sweat. You don't have to let anybody chase you out of your favorite restaurant in your own town—I mean, that's not right, is it? That's not in the spirit of friendly competition."

"Jason," she said, and she reached across the table and took hold of his wrist. "I mean it. Let's get out of here. Now."

Her throat was constricted, everything she'd eaten about to come up. Her legs ached, and her ankle—the one she'd sprained last spring—felt as if someone had driven a nail through it. All she could think of was Zinny Bauer, with her long muscles and the shaved blond stubble of her head and her eyes that never quit. Zinny Bauer was behind her, at her back, right there, and it was too much to bear. "*Jason*," she hissed.

"O.K., O.K.," he was saying, and he tipped back the dregs of his beer and reached into his pocket and scattered a couple of rumpled bills across the table to cover the checks. Then he rose from the chair with a slow drunken grandeur and gave her a wink as if to indicate that the coast was clear. She got up, hunching her shoulders as if she could compress herself into invisibility, and stared down at her feet as Jason took her arm and led her across the room—if Zinny saw her, Paula wouldn't know about it, because she wasn't going to look up and she wasn't going to make eye contact, she wasn't.

Or so she thought.

She was concentrating on her feet, on the black-and-white checked pattern of the floor tiles and how her running shoes negotiated them as if they were attached to somebody else's legs, when all of a sudden Jason stopped and her eyes flew up and she saw that they were hovering over Zinny Bauer's table like casual acquaintances, like neighbors on their way to a PTA meeting. "But aren't you Zinny Bauer?" Jason said, his voice gone high and nasal as he shifted into his Valley Girl imitation. "The great triathlete? Oh God, yes, yes you are, aren't you? Oh, God, could I have your autograph for my little girl?"

Paula was made of stone. She couldn't move, couldn't speak, couldn't even blink her eyes. And Zinny—she looked as if her plane had just crashed. Jason was playing out the charade, pretending to fumble through his pockets for a pen, when Armin broke the silence. "Why don't you just fock off," he said, and the veins stood out in his neck.

"Oh, she'll be so thrilled," Jason went on, his voice pinched to a squeal. "She's so adorable, only six years old, and, oh my God, she's not going to believe this!"

Armin rose to his feet. Zinny clutched at the edge of the table with bloodless fingers, her eyes narrow and hard. The waiter—the one Jason had been riding—started toward them, crying out, "Is everything all right?," as if the phrase had any meaning.

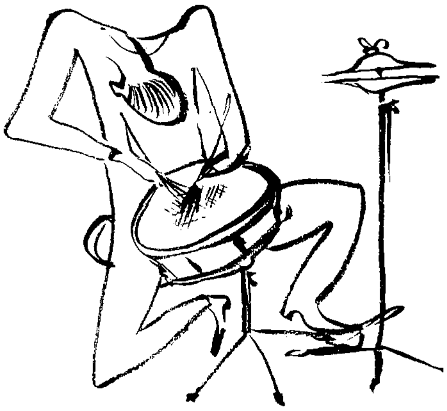
And then Jason's voice changed, just like that. "Fuck you, too, Jack, and your scrawny fucking bald-headed squeeze."

Armin worked out, you could see that, and Paula doubted he'd ever pressed a cigarette to his lips, let alone a joint, but still Jason managed to hold his own—at least until the kitchen staff separated them. There was some breakage, a couple of chairs overturned, a whole lot of noise and cursing and threatening, most of it from Jason. Every face in the restaurant was drained of color by the time the kitchen staff came to the rescue, and somebody went to the phone and called the police, but Jason blustered his way out the door and disappeared before they arrived. And Paula? She just melted away and kept on melting until she found herself behind the wheel of the car, cruising slowly down the darkened streets, looking for Jason.

She never did find him.

WHEN he called the next morning, he was all sweetness and apology. He whispered, moaned, sang to her, his voice a continuous soothing current insinuating itself through the line and into her head and right on down through her veins and arteries to the unresisting core of her. "Listen, Paula, I didn't mean for things to get out of hand," he whispered, "you've got to believe me. I just didn't think you had to hide from anybody, that's all."

She listened, her mind gone numb, and let his words saturate her. It was the day before the event, and she wasn't going to let anything distract her. But then, as he went on, pouring himself into the phone with his penitential, self-pitying tones as if he were the one who'd been embarrassed and humiliated, she felt the outrage coming up in her: didn't he understand, didn't he know what it meant to stare into the face of your own defeat? And over a plate of pasta, no less? She cut him off in the middle of a long digression about some surfing legend of the fifties and all the adversity he'd had to face from a host of competitors, a bloodsucking wife, and a fearsome backwash off Newport Beach.



"What did you think?" she demanded. "That you were protecting me or something? Is that it? Because if that's what you think, let me tell you I don't need you or anybody else to stand up for me—"

"Paula," he said, his voice creeping out at her over the wire, "Paula—I'm on your side, remember? I love what you're doing. I want to help you." He paused. "And yes, I want to protect you, too."

"I don't need it."

"Yes you do. You don't think you do, but you do. Don't you see: I was trying to psych her."

"Psych her? At the Pasta Bowl?"

His voice was soft, so soft she could barely hear him: "Yeah." And then, even softer: "I did it for you."

IT was Saturday, seventy-eight degrees, sun beaming down unmolested, the tourists out in force. The shop had been buzzing since ten, nothing major—cords, tube socks, T-shirts, a couple of illustrated guides to South Coast hot spots that nobody who knew anything needed a book to find—but Jason had been at the cash register right through lunch and on into the four-thirty breathing spell, when the tourist mind tended to fixate on ice-cream cones and those pathetic sidecar bikes they pedalled up and down the street like the true guppies they were. He'd even called Little Drake in to help out for a couple of hours there. Drake didn't mind. He'd grown up rich in Montecito and gone white-haired at twenty-seven, and now he lived with his even whiter-haired old parents and managed their two rental properties downtown—which meant he had nothing much to do except prop up the bar at Clubber's or haunt the shop like the thinnest ghost of a customer. So why not put him to work?

"Nothing to shout about," Jason told him, over the faint hum of the oldies channel. He leaned back against the wall on his high stool and cracked the first beer of the day. "Little stuff, but a lot of it. I almost had that one dude sold on the Al Merrick board—I could taste it—but something scared him off. Maybe Mommy took away his Visa card, I don't know."

Drake pulled contemplatively at his beer and looked out the window at the

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"Morning workout." Emily Stoddard on the
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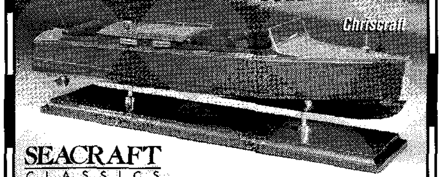

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parade of tourists marching up and down State Street. He didn't respond. It was approaching that crucial hour of the day, the hour known as cocktail hour, two for one, the light stuck on the underside of the palms, everything soft and pretty and winding down toward dinner and evening, the whole night held out before them like a promise. "What time's the Dodger game?" Drake said finally.

Jason looked at his watch. It was a reflex. The Dodgers were playing the Pods at five-thirty, Nomo against Benes, and he knew the time and channel as well as he knew his A.T.M. number. The Angels were on Prime Ticket, seven-thirty, at home against the Orioles. And Paula—Paula was at home, too, focussing (do not disturb, thank you very much) for the big one with the Amazing Bone Woman the next morning. "Five-thirty," he said, after a long pause.

Drake said nothing. His beer was gone, and he shuffled behind the counter to the little reefer for another. When he'd cracked it, sipped, belched, scratched himself thoroughly, and commented on the physique of an overweight Mexican chick in a red bikini making her way up from the beach, he ventured a query on the topic under consideration: "Time to close up?"

All things being equal, Jason would have stayed open till six, or near six anyway, on a Saturday in August. The summer months accounted for the lion's share of his business—it was like the Christmas season for everybody else—and he tried to maximize it, he really did, but he knew what Drake was saying. Twenty to five now, and they still had to count the receipts, lock up, stop by the night deposit at the B. of A., and then settle in at Clubber's for the game. It would be nice to be there, maybe with a tall tequila tonic and the sports section spread out on the bar, before the game got under way. Just to settle in and enjoy the fruits of their labor. He gave a sigh, for form's sake, and said, "Yeah, why not?"

And then there was cocktail hour, and he had a couple of tall tequila tonics before switching to beer, and the Dodgers looked good, real good, red hot, and somebody bought him a shot. Drake was carrying on about something—his girlfriend's cat, the calluses on his mother's feet—and Jason tuned him out, ordered two soft chicken tacos, and watched the sun do all sorts of amazing pink-and-salmon things to the storefronts across the street before the gray finally settled in. He was thinking he should have gone surfing today, thinking he'd maybe go out in the morning, and then he was thinking of Paula. He should wish her luck or something, give her a phone call, at least. But the more he thought about it, the more he pictured her alone in her apartment, power-drinking her fluids, sunk into the shell of her focus like some Chinese Zen master, and the more he wanted to see her.

They hadn't had sex in a week. She was always like that when it was coming down to the wire, and he didn't blame her. Or yes—yes, he did blame her. And he resented it, too. What was the big deal? It wasn't like she was playing ball or anything that took any skill—and why lock him out for that? She was like his overachieving, straight-arrow parents, Type A personalities, early risers, joggers, let's go out and beat the world. God, that was anal. But she had some body on her, as firm and flawless as the Illustrated Man's—or Woman's, actually. He thought about that and about the way her face softened when they were in bed together, and he stood at the pay phone seeing her in the hazy soft-focus glow of some made-for-TV movie. Maybe he shouldn't call. Maybe he should just . . . surprise her.

She answered the door in an oversized sweatshirt and shorts, barefooted, and with the half-full pitcher from the blender in her hand. She looked surprised, all right, but not pleasantly surprised. In fact, she scowled at him and set the pitcher down on the bookcase before pulling back the door and ushering him in. He didn't even get the chance to tell her he loved her or to wish her luck before she started in on him. "What are you doing here?" she demanded. "You know I can't see you tonight, of all nights. What's with you? Are you drunk? Is that it?"

What could he say? He stared at the brown gloop in the pitcher for half a beat and then gave her his best simmering droopy-eyed smile and a shrug that ra-

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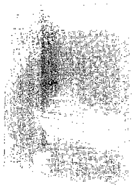
FALL 1995



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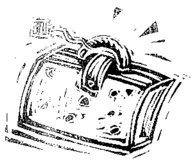

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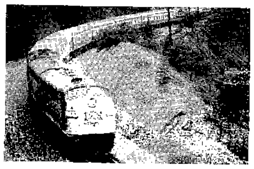

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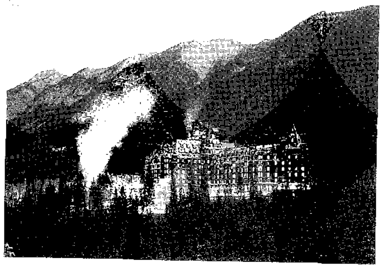

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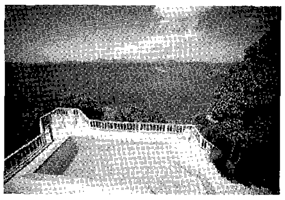

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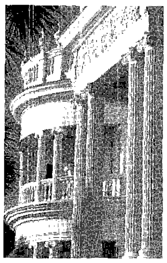

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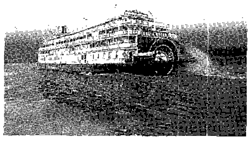

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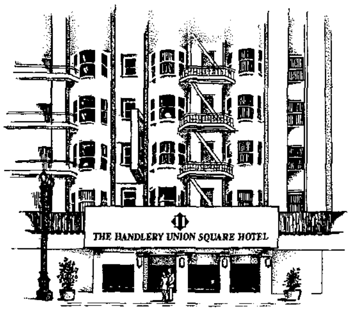
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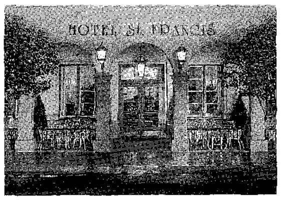

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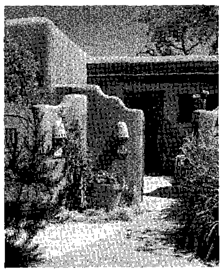

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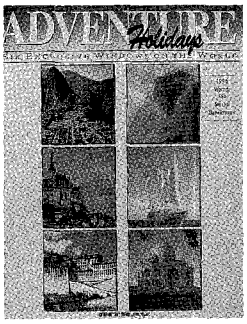

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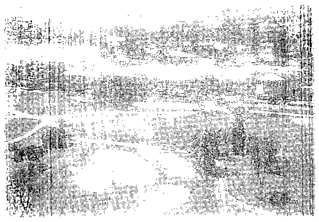

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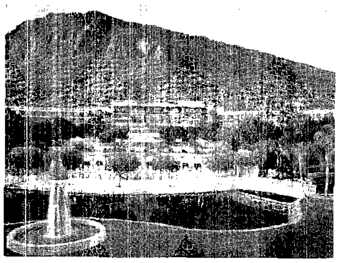

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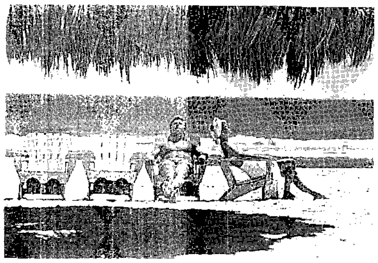

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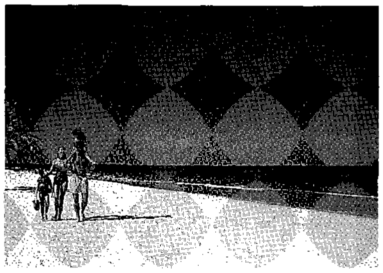

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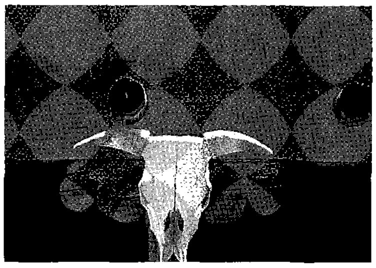

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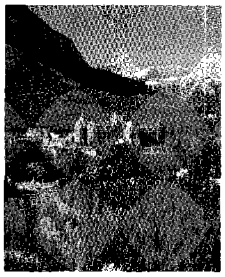

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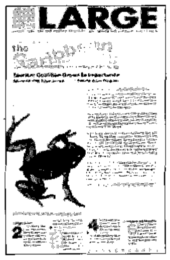

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diated down from his shoulders to his hips. "I just wanted to see you. To wish you luck, you know?" He stepped forward to kiss her, but she dodged away from him, snatching up the pitcher full of gloop like a shield. "A kiss for luck?" he said.

She hesitated. He could see something go in and out of her eyes, the flicker of a worry, competitive anxiety, butterflies, and then she smiled and pecked him a kiss on the lips that tasted of soy and honey and whatever else was in that concoction she drank. "Luck," she said, "but no excitement."

"And no sex," he said, trying to make a joke of it. "I know."

She laughed then, a high, girlish tinkle of a laugh that broke the spell. "No sex," she said. "But I was just going to watch a movie, if you want to join me—"

He found one of the beers he'd left in the refrigerator for just such an emergency as this and settled in beside her on the couch to watch the movie—some inspirational crap about a demi-cripple who wins the hurdle event in the Swedish Special Olympics—but he was hot, he couldn't help it, and his fingers kept wandering from her shoulder to her breast, from her waist to her inner thigh. At least she kissed him when she pushed him away. "Tomorrow," she promised, but it was only a promise, and they both knew it. She'd been so devastated after the Houston thing she wouldn't sleep with him for a week and a half, strung tight as a bow every time he touched her. The memory of it chewed at him, and he sipped his beer moodily. "Bullshit," he said.

"Bullshit what?"

"Bullshit you'll sleep with me tomorrow. Remember Houston? Remember Zinny Bauer?"

Her face changed suddenly and she flicked the remote angrily at the screen and the picture went blank. "I think you better go," she said.

But he didn't want to go. She was his girlfriend, wasn't she? And what good did it do him if she kicked him out every time some chickenshit race came up? Didn't he matter to her, didn't he matter at all? "I don't want to go," he said.

She stood, put her hands on her hips, and glared at him. "I have to go to bed now."

He didn't budge. Didn't move a muscle. "That's what I mean," he said, and his face was ugly, he couldn't help it. "I want to go to bed, too."

LATER, he felt bad about the whole thing. Worse than bad. He didn't know how it happened exactly, but there was some resentment there, he guessed, and it just snuck up on him—plus he was drunk, if that was any excuse. Which it wasn't. Anyway, he hadn't meant to get physical, and by the time she'd stopped fighting him and he got her shorts down he hadn't even really wanted to go through with it. This wasn't making love, this wasn't what he wanted. She just lay there beneath him like she was dead, like some sort of zombie, and it made him sick, so sick he couldn't even begin to apologize or excuse himself. He felt her eyes on him as he was zipping up, hard eyes, accusatory eyes, eyes like claws, and he had to stagger into the bathroom and cover himself with the noise of both taps and the toilet to keep from breaking down. He'd gone too far. He knew it. He was ashamed of himself, deeply ashamed, and there really wasn't anything left to say. He just slumped his shoulders and slouched out the door.

And now here he was, contrite and hung over, mooning around on East Beach in the cool hush of 7 A.M., waiting with all the rest of the guppies for the race to start. Paula wouldn't even look at him. Her mouth was set, clamped shut, a tiny little line of nothing beneath her nose, and her eyes looked no further than her equipment—her spidery ultra-lightweight bike with the triathlon bars and her little skullcap of a helmet and water bottles and whatnot. She was wearing a two-piece swimsuit, and she'd already had her number—23—painted on her upper arms and the long burnished muscles of her thighs. He shook out a cigarette and stared off past her, wondering what they used for the numbers—Magic Marker? Greasepaint? Something that wouldn't come off in the surf, anyway—or with all the sweat. He remembered the way she'd looked in Houston, pounding through the muggy haze in a sheen of sweat, her face sunk in a mask of suffering, her legs and buttocks taut, her breasts flattened to her chest in the grip of the clinging top. He thought about that, watching her from behind the police line as she bent to fool with her bike, not an ounce of fat on her, noth-

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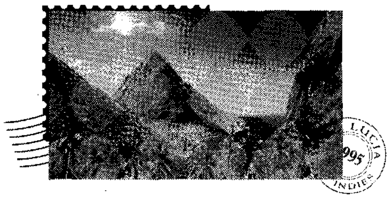

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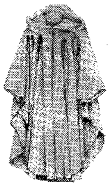

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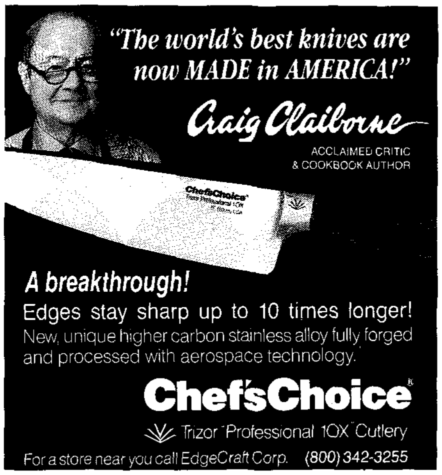
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ing, not even a stray hair, and he got hard just looking at her.

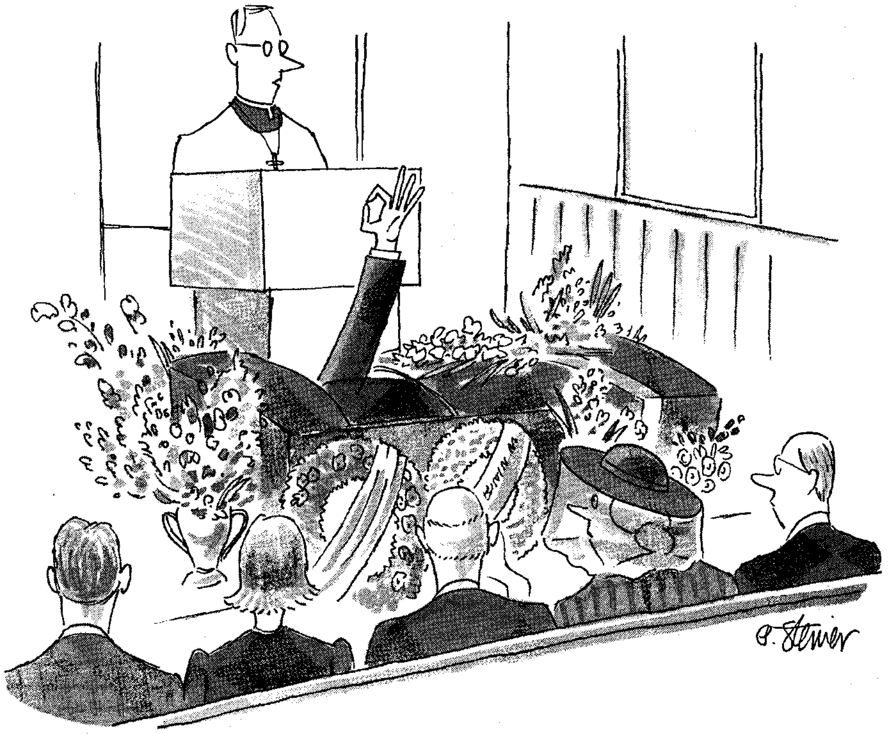
But that was short-lived, because he felt bad about last night and knew he'd have to really put himself through the wringer to make it up to her. Plus, just watching the rest of the four hundred and six fleshless masochists parade by with their Gore-Tex T-shirts and Lycra shorts and all the rest of their paraphernalia was enough to make him go cold all over. His stomach felt like a fried egg left out on the counter too long, and his hands shook when he lit the cigarette. He should be in bed, that's where he should be—enough of this 7 A.M. They were crazy, these people, purely crazy, getting up at dawn to put themselves through something like this—one mile in the water, thirty-four on the bike, and a ten-mile run to wrap it up, and this was a walk compared to the Ironman. They were all bone and long lean muscle, like whippet dogs or something, the women indistinguishable from the men, stringy and titless. Except for Paula. She was all right in that department, and that was genetic—she referred to her breasts as her fat reserves. He was wondering if they shrank at all during the race, what with all that stress and water loss, when a woman with big hair and too much makeup asked him for a light.

She was milling around with maybe a couple of hundred other spectators—or sadists, he guessed you'd have to call them—waiting to watch the crazies do their thing. "Thanks," she breathed, after he'd leaned in close to touch the tip of his smoke to hers. Her eyes were big wet pools, and she was no freak, no bone woman. Her lips were wet, too, or maybe it was his imagination. "So," she said, the voice caught low in her throat, a real smoker's rasp, "here for the big event?"

He just nodded.

There was a pause. They sucked at their cigarettes. A pair of gulls flailed sharply at the air behind them and then settled down to poke through the sand for anything that looked edible. "My name's Sandra," she offered, but he wasn't listening, not really, because it was then that it came to him, his inspiration, his moment of grace and redemption: suddenly, he knew how he was going to make it up to Paula. He cut his eyes away from the woman and through the crowd to where Paula bent over her equipment, the take-no-prisoners look ironed into her face. And what does she want more than anything? he asked himself, his excitement so intense he almost spoke the words aloud. What would make her happy, glad to see him, ready to party, celebrate, dance till dawn, and let bygones be bygones?

To win. That was all. To beat Zinny

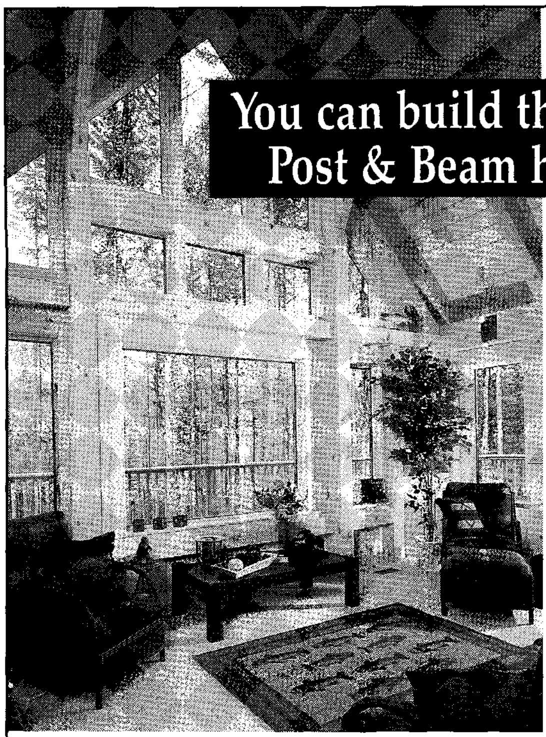


"Most of all, he'll be remembered for his irrepressible spirit."

Bauer. And in that moment, even as Paula caught his eye and glowered at him, he had a vision of Zinny Bauer, the Amazing Bone Woman, coming into the final stretch with her legs and arms pumping, in command, no problem, and the bright-green cup of Gatorade held out for her by the smiling volunteer in the official volunteer's cap and T-shirt—yes—and Zinny Bauer refreshing herself, drinking it down in mid-stride, running on and on until she hit the wall he was already constructing.

PAULA pulled the red bathing cap down over her ears, adjusted her swim goggles, and strode across the beach, her heartbeat as slow and steady as a lizard's on a cold rock. She was focussed, as clear-headed and certain as she'd ever been in her life. Nothing mattered now except leaving all the hotshots and loudmouths and macho types behind in the dust—and Zinny Bauer, too. There were a couple of pros competing in the men's division and she had no illusions about beating them, but she was going to teach the rest of them a hard lesson, a lesson about toughness and endurance and will. If anything, what had happened with Jason last night was something she could use, the kind of thing that made her angry, that made her wonder what she'd seen in him in the first place. He didn't care about her. He didn't care about anybody. That was what she was thinking when the gun went off and she hit the water with the great thundering herd of them, the image of his bleary apologetic face burning into her brain—date rape, that's what they called it—and she came out of the surf just behind Zinny Bauer, Jill Eisen, and Tommy Roe, one of the men's pros.

All right. O.K. She was on her bike now, through the gate in a flash and driving down the flat wide concourse of Cabrillo Boulevard in perfect rhythm, effortless, as if the blood were flowing through her legs and into the bike itself. Before she'd gone half a mile, she knew she was going to catch Zinny Bauer and pass her to ride with the men's leaders and get off first on the run. It was preordained, she could feel it, feel it pounding in her temples and in the perfect engine of her heart. The anger had settled in her legs now, a bitter, hot-burning fuel. She fed on the air, tucked herself into the handlebars, and flew. If all this time she'd



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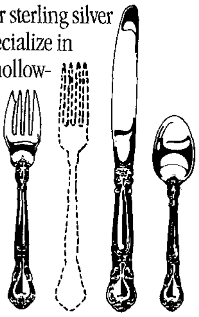

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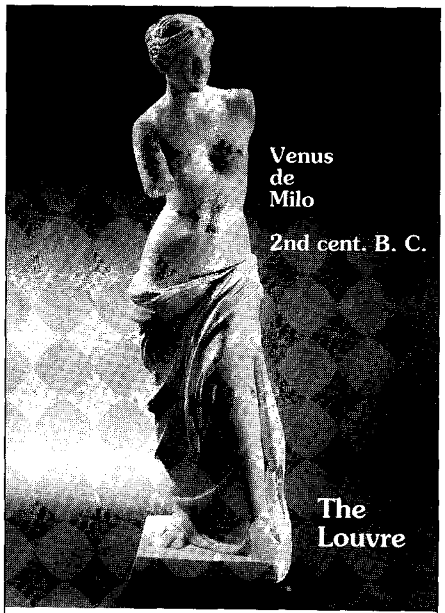

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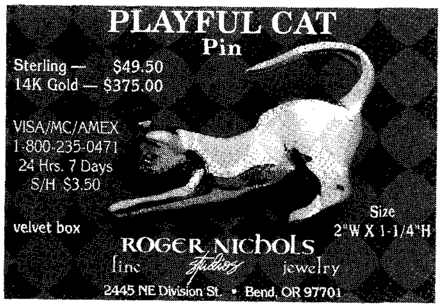

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raced for herself, for something uncontainable inside her, now she was racing for Jason, to show him up, to show him what she was, what she really was. There was no excuse for him. None. And she was going to win this event, she was going to beat Zinny Bauer and all those hundreds of soft, winded, undertrained, crowing, chest-thumping jocks, too, and she was going to accept her trophy and stride right by him as if he didn't exist, because she wasn't soft, she wasn't, and he was going to find that out once and for all.

BY the time he got back to the beach, Jason thought he'd run some sort of race himself. He was breathing hard—got to quit smoking—and his tequila headache was heating up to the point where he was seriously considering ducking into Clubber's and slamming a shot or two, though it was only half past nine and all the tourists would be there, buttering their French toast and would you pass the syrup please and thank you very much. He'd had to go all the way out to Drake's place and shake him awake to get the Tuinol—*one of Drake's mother's six thousand* and one prescriptions to fight off the withering aches of her seventy-odd years. Tuinol, Nembutal, Dalmane, Darvocet: Jason didn't care, just so long as there was enough of it. He didn't do barbiturates anymore—probably hadn't swallowed a Tooey in ten years—but he remembered the sweet numb glow they gave him and the way they made his legs feel like tree trunks planted deep in the ground.

The sun had burned off the fog by now, and the day was clear and glittering on the water. They'd started the race at seven-thirty, so that gave him a while yet—the first men would be crossing the finish line in just under three hours, and the women would be coming in at three-ten, three-twelve, something like that. All he needed to do now was finesse himself into the inner sanctum, pick up a stray T-shirt and cap, find the Gatorade, and plant himself about two miles from the finish. Of course, there was a chance the Amazing Bone Woman wouldn't take the cup from him, especially if she recognized him from the other night, but he was going to pull his cap down low and hide behind his Ray-Bans and show her a face of devotion. One second, that's all it would take. A hand coming out of the crowd, the cup beaded with moisture and moving right along beside her so she didn't even have to break stride—and what was there to think about? She drinks and hits the wall. And if she didn't go for it the first time, he'd hop in the car and catch her a mile farther on.

He'd been watching one of the security volunteers stationed outside the trailer that served as a command center. A kid of eighteen, maybe, greasy hair, an oversized cross dangling from one ear, a scurf of residual acne. He was a carbon copy of the kids he sold wetsuits and Killer Bees Wax to—maybe he was even one of them. Jason reminded himself to tread carefully. He was a businessman, after all, one of the pillars of the downtown community, and somebody might recognize him. But then so what if they did? He was volunteering his time, that was all, a committed citizen doing his civic best to promote tourism and everything else that was right in the world. He ducked under the rope. "Hey, bro," he said to the kid, extending his hand for the high five—which the kid gave him. "Sorry I'm late. Jeff around?"

The kid's face opened up in a big beaming half-witted grin. "Yeah, sure—I think he went up the beach a ways with Everardo and Linda and some of the press people, but I could maybe look if you want—"

Jeff. It was a safe bet—no crowd of that size, especially one consisting of whippets, bone people, and guppies, would be without a Jeff. Jason gave the kid a shrug. "Nah, that's all right. But hey, where's the T-shirts and caps at?"

Then he was in his car, and forget the D.U.I., the big green waxed cup cold between his legs, breaking Tuinol caps and looking for a parking space along the course. He pulled in under a huge Monterey pine that was like its own little city and finished doctoring the Gatorade, stirring the stuff in with his index finger. What would it take to make the Bone Woman's legs go numb and wind up a Did Not Finish without arousing suspicion? Two? Three? He didn't want her to pass out on the spot or take a dive into the bushes or anything, and he didn't want to hurt her, either, not really. But four—four was a nice round number, and that ought to

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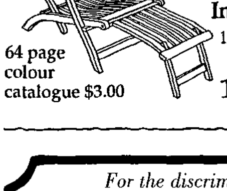

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MOST OF MY LIFE

A squirrel eating her way in and a mother cardinal
with such an eye she knew two things at once
in what was work for her lower than me here
I'm sure as close to her nest as she would allow
without engaging her whole prudent being, and I,
saying cheer to her, what cheer, what cheer,
breathing my own prudent last if that was necessary,
my heart going out to her, for all she knew
my feet like bird's feet—I could be her child,
if it were necessary, and die on a thorn
or wear a dress for her and sparkle as rain does
and wear my sparkling beads and wear a sparkling
tear on my cheek or I could be as still
as she wants, I could be a stone, till her eye
is satisfied, she is so rough in these things,
she is so sloppy, look at her straw, she is
so close to my mother—is that Ida, her eye
shrewd and watching? Daughter of lilac, wife
of honeysuckle and privet—ah, she has worked
and her heart is beating, she is a nurse, and a scholar,
and an architect, her slur and her rocking body
proof positive; she lands on my impatiens,
she flies to my birch, and I lie dead in her lap
and dead in the bark and dead in the grass stems, my arms
hanging out of the nest, leaves on my chest,
weeds and rootlets here and there, my stomach
a little red already and a little brown,
a twig in my mouth, but only by accident,
for there is more love than not, and she is reaching
to get the twig and I am holding on,
which is enough for one day, pity alone
enough for the two of us though there was grief
and duty, too. I would have held up a lily
for her for she is not to blame; I would have
dried her tears. I did it for most of my life.

—GERALD STERN

do it. He sucked the finger he'd used as a swizzle stick to see if he could detect the taste, but he couldn't. He took a tentative sip. Nothing. Gatorade tasted like such shit anyway, who could tell the difference?

He found a knot of volunteers in their canary-yellow T-shirts and caps and stationed himself a hundred yards up the street from them, the ice rattling as he swirled his little green time bomb around the lip of the cup. The breeze was soft, the sun caught in the crowns of the trees and reaching out to finger the road here and there in long slim swatches. He'd never tell Paula, of course, no way, but he'd get giddy with her, pop the champagne cork, and let her fill him with all the ecstasy of victory.

A cheer from the crowd brought him out of his reverie. The first of the men was cranking his way around the long bend in the road, a guy with a beard and wraparound sunglasses—the Finn. He was the one favored to win, or was it the Brit? Jason tucked the cup behind his back and faded into the crowd, which was pretty sparse here, and watched the guy propel himself past, his mouth gaping black, the two holes of his nostrils punched deep into his face, his head bobbing on his neck as if it weren't attached right. Another guy appeared around the corner just as the Finn passed by, and then two others came slogging along behind him. Somebody cheered, but it was a pretty feeble affair.

Jason checked his watch. It would be five minutes or so, and then he could start watching for the Amazing Bone Woman, tireless freak that she was. And did she fuck Klaus, or Olaf, or whoever he was, the night before the big event, or was she like Paula, all focus and negativity and no, no, no? He fingered the cup lightly, reminding himself not to damage or crease it in any way—it had to look pristine, fresh-dipped from the bucket—and he watched the corner at the end of the street till his eyes began to blur from the sheer concentration of it all.

Two more men passed by and nobody cheered, not a murmur, but then suddenly a couple of middle-aged women across the street set up a howl, and the crowd chimed in: the first woman, a woman of string and bone with a puffing heaving puppetlike frame, was swinging into the street in distant silhouette. Jason moved forward. He tugged reflexively at the bill of his hat, jammed the rims of the shades back into his eyesockets. And he started to grin, all his teeth on fire, his lips spread wide: Here, take me, drink me, have me!

As the woman drew closer, loping, sweating, elbows flailing and knees pounding, the crowd getting into it now, cheering her, cheering this first of the women in a man's event, the first Ironwoman of the day, he began to realize that this wasn't Zinny Bauer at all. Her hair was too long, and her legs and chest were too full—and then he saw the number clearly, No. 23, and looked into Paula's face. She was fifty yards from him, but he could see the toughness in her eyes and the tight little frozen smile of triumph and superiority. She was winning. She was beating Zinny Bauer and Jill Eisen and all those pathetic jocks laboring up the hills and down the blacktop streets behind her. This was her moment, this was it.

But then, and he didn't stop to think about it, he stepped forward, right out on the street where she could see him, and held out the cup. He heard her feet beating at the pavement with a hard merciless slap, saw the icy twist of a smile and the cold triumphant eyes. And he felt the briefest fleeting touch of her flesh as the cup left his hand. ♦

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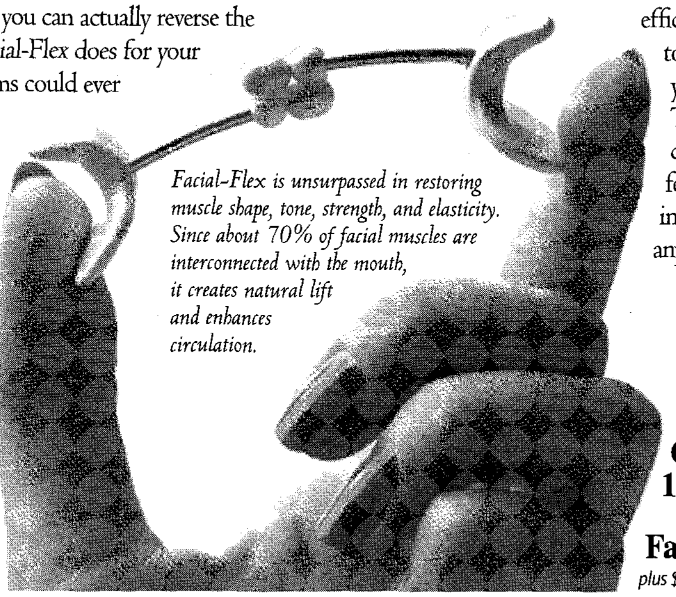

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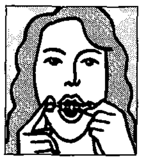

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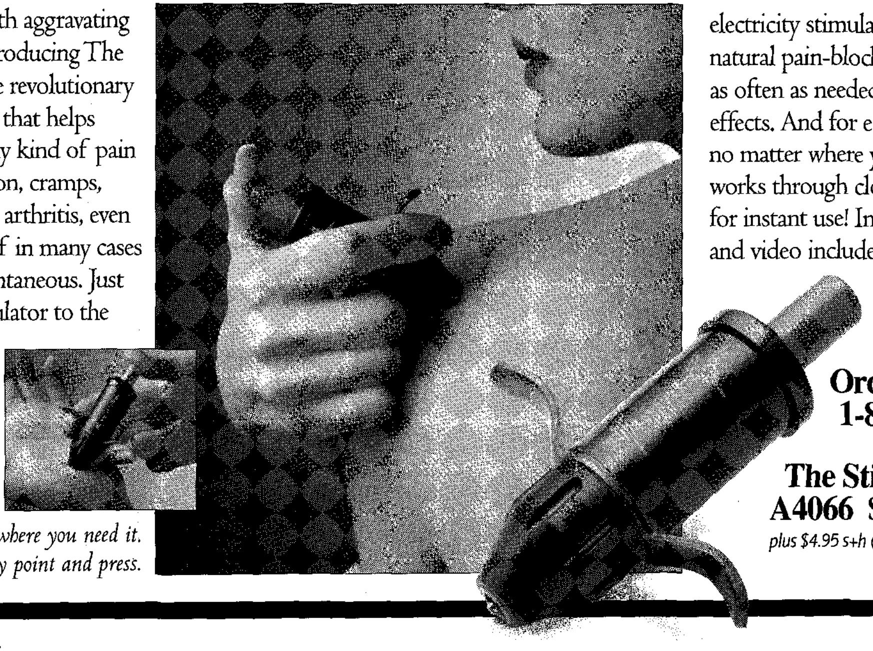

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BOOKS

THE THREE SISTERS

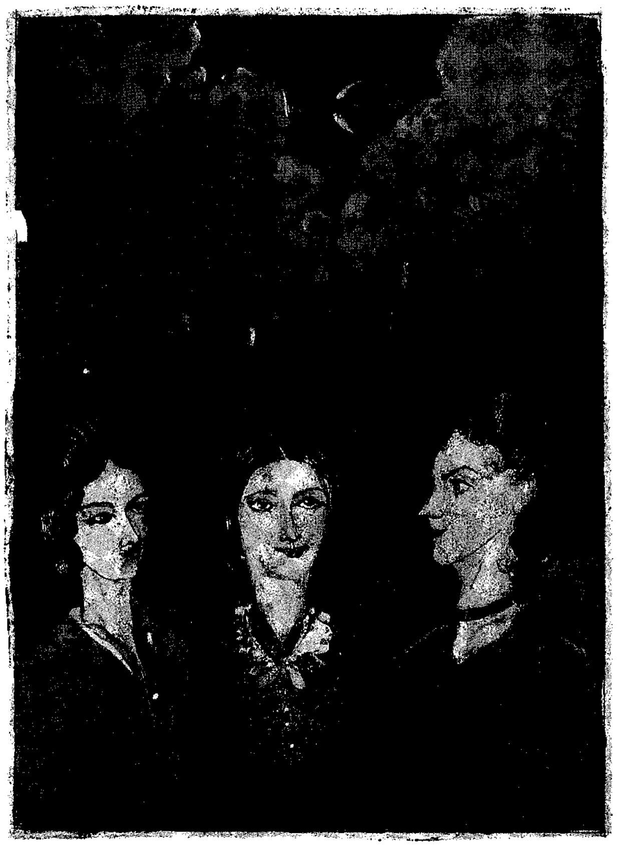
The Brontës, as they have never been seen before.

BY PETER ACKROYD

IT is one of the most charming stories in English literary history. In July, 1848, the publisher George Smith found waiting for him in his London office two "rather quaintly dressed little ladies, pale-faced and anxious-looking." The smaller and plainer of them, wearing glasses, came up to him with a letter in her hand. It was addressed to Currer Bell, the somewhat notorious male novelist best known as the author of "Jane Eyre." "Where did you get this from?" Smith asked her. "From the post office," Charlotte Brontë replied. "It was addressed to me." So it was that the secret of the Brontë sisters was revealed. Mr. Smith's most famous author was a woman—and a provincial woman at that. Charlotte was undistinguished, with a head that struck Mr. Smith as "too large for her body"; she might just as well have been a missionary, or even a cook. Her younger sister Anne had a manner "curiously expressive of a wish for protection and encouragement, a kind of constant appeal." Emily, the middle sister, had remained at home in Yorkshire, where she kept house and fed the dogs.

Mr. Smith could hardly have guessed that he was present at the birth of a literary legend as powerful as that of Marlowe's murder or Chatterton's suicide. The received story of the Brontës was not so sanguinary, but it was equally sensational. The world soon knew that there had been three women of genius, untutored and unloved, immured within a house as bleak as any prison or asylum, insulted by a drunken and manic brother, oppressed by a stern and occasionally violent father, finding their relief only in wonderful little treks across the Yorkshire moors.

Mrs. Gaskell, possibly the most credulous and most sentimental biographer of the nineteenth century, began the process. She was already a famous novelist, but she reserved her finest fictional touches for her life of Charlotte Brontë. Her sublimely inaccurate portrait was followed by works of various other biographers, who managed to fill their books with material more extravagant than anything to be found in a Brontë novel. One of them had the sisters eating "gypsy fashion" on the moors, while another tried to prove that all their writings were based upon Irish originals.



Emily, Charlotte, and Anne: Neither mad nor bad nor particularly dangerous to know.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

There was a reaction against these excesses when certain unfortunately prosaic facts were introduced by Francis Leyland, in his 1886 biography. Yet the general tendency has continued to be toward a kind of morbid romanticism, and it must be said that Juliet Barker's comprehensive and sensible new work, "The Brontës" (St. Martin's; $35), is the first that wholly takes a stand against the legend. The girls were neither mad nor bad nor particularly dangerous to know. Their father, Patrick, was a kind and genial parent; their brother, Branwell, was a talented and resourceful writer; Aunt Elizabeth Branwell was not the ferocious and dogmatic Methodist of myth but a rather flighty old party of advanced views. All this will come as a severe disappointment to the more excitable Brontë admirers, but, in exchange for their illusions, Juliet Barker offers them a beguiling and convincing account of the family upon the moors.

Patrick Brontë was an Irishman of straitened means who by skill and hard work made his way to Cambridge University. He became a devout Evangelical, then a minister who managed to give even "muscular Christianity" a good name. In 1812, while serving at a church in Hartshead, near Dewsbury, Yorkshire, he met Maria Branwell, his future wife. She was bright, alert, and energetic, with her own propensity for religious fervor. They conversed upon "the heavenly Father" and "eternal felicity," but there were one or two pleasantly gothic touches to redeem an otherwise sober courtship: he proposed to her in a ruined abbey, and her bridal veil was lost in a shipwreck.

So the Brontë children emerged from a pious household where the machinations of the local religious societies provided the only hint of drama. Patrick fulfilled his pastoral duties conscientiously and, on one notable occasion, preached to the Bradford Female Auxiliary Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews. He wrote poems and stories that ended happily, as all evangelical stories should, yet were strangely prescient of his daughters' later productions. Maria

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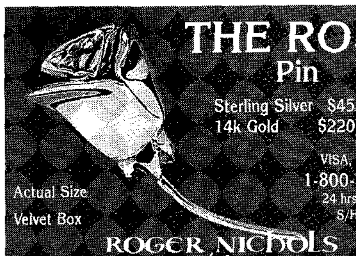

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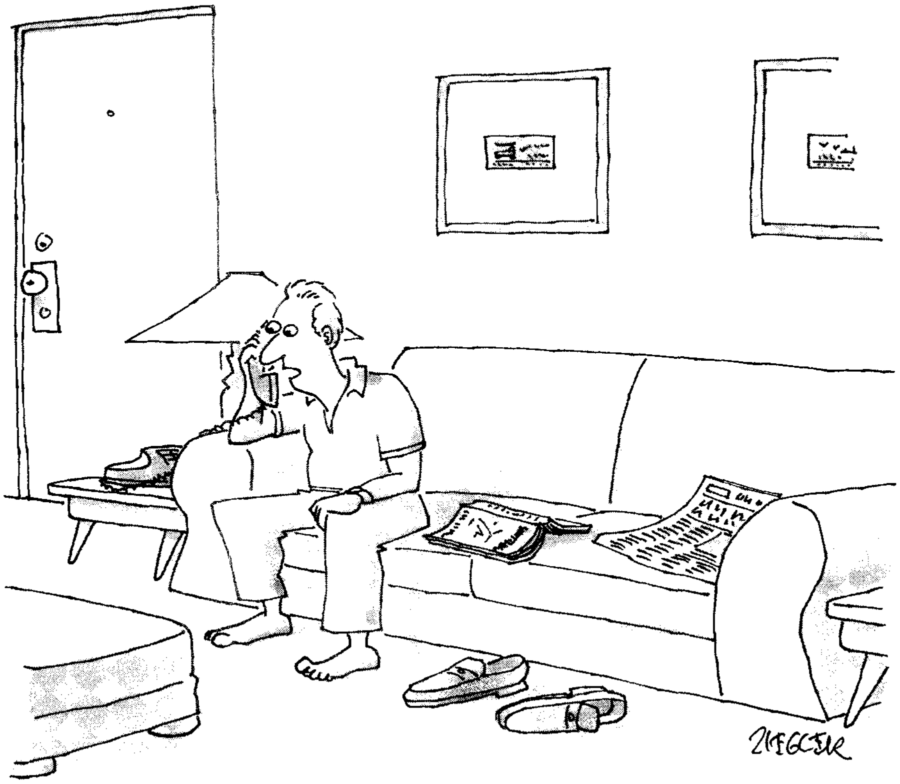
wrote, too, and once composed an essay on the virtues of poverty. It is all sufficiently starched and restrained, if not quite as grim as the readers of "Wuthering Heights" might wish.

Seven years after his marriage, Patrick Brontë announced that "Providence has called me to labour in His vineyard at Haworth." Haworth was described by a clergyman as almost a "heathen village," whose inhabitants treated people "like wild beasts," and this is the impression that Brontë biographers have tried to maintain. The fact is, however, that Haworth was not a backwater on the edge of desolation but a prosperous industrial town. The adjacent moors have also been a source of romance, of course—at least for those who know little about them. Mrs. Gaskell considered them to be an ominous brown but, Barker points out, she had merely visited them at the wrong time of the year. And the Brontë parsonage itself is not quite the horrid pile she depicted but a late-eighteenth-century house of some elegance and charm. The view of the moors from its windows was splendid, and not one to incite any particularly grotesque associations. Those came from closer quarters.

A YEAR and a half after the move to Haworth, Maria Brontë died, crying out continuously, "Oh God my poor children—oh God my poor children!" Four years later, the two eldest, Maria and Elizabeth, died of consumption, contracted at a boarding school for the daughters of clergymen. These were indeed formative experiences in the lives of the remaining siblings, but the Brontë sisters did not automatically become the silent wraiths of Mrs. Gaskell's imagination. On the contrary, Barker shows that their childhood was essentially a happy one, and that the accounts of suffering were largely promulgated as a way of excusing those passionate elements of the Brontës' fiction "which the Victorians found unacceptable." In truth, the remaining Brontë children were remarkable only in the literary predilections that they shared, and Barker provides a wonderful portrait of four highly intelligent people who preferred one another's company to anyone else's and, as a result, stimulated one another's already overheated imaginations. They contracted "scribblemania," and poured out an endless stream of prose and verse written in very small letters on tiny scraps of paper. Charlotte and Branwell collaborated on the creation of a fictional world known as Angria—and for a time, it seems, Branwell was the better writer. Emily and Anne, who had become "like twins, inseparable companions," worked together on events in a land named Gondal. The four of them were instinctive novelists, mainly because they saw no distinction between invention and reality; it is hard to overemphasize how much those unreal worlds meant to them, since they seem to have dreamed, lived, and imagined very little else. It should come as no surprise, then, that their "mature" fiction springs directly from their childhood writing. The scenes and passions of "Wuthering Heights" come from Gondal, and Charlotte purloined the opening chapters of "The Professor" from one of Branwell's pieces.

Still, the Brontës needed a wider field in which to display their talents. Part of the reason for their immersion in fictional worlds was no doubt a certain irritable dissatisfaction with the real world around them. And Charlotte was, characteristically, the most irritable of all. She believed herself to be ugly, and believed Haworth to be a "miserable little village"; to one friend, she "seemed to have no interest or pleasure beyond the feeling of duty." She became a governess and a teacher but was unimpressed by, as she wrote in her diary, "the apathy and the hyperbolical & most asinine stupidity of these fat-headed oafs" whom she tried to instruct. She could be very hard on her pupils—"A Dolt came up with a lesson. I thought I should have vomited," she wrote—but, from that time forward, she also became very interesting. She began to show all the signs of a young writer's frustration: she was angry at herself for remaining unknown and angry at the world for its reluctance to know her. She did send some poems to Robert Southey, the Poet Laureate, who replied that "literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be." She was twenty-one years old, and she wrapped up this appalling piece of advice with a note in her own hand: "Southey's Advice To be kept for ever."

IT is Charlotte's vulnerability and emotionalism that really make her the paramount Brontë sister—and, indeed,



"Look, I'm doing a little me-time right now. Why don't you go ahead and do a little you-time, and then I'll be over at eight for a little us-time."

• •

the heroine of Barker's biography. Or perhaps "heroine" is not quite the right word, since in this notably candid account she emerges in many respects an unsympathetic creature. We thought that she was Jane Eyre, but all along she was Mr. Rochester. We can also be quite sure that this somewhat unflattering description is, for once, no figment of the biographical imagination. Barker's assessments are as sober as a bookkeeper's. She calls contemporary accounts of Charlotte "extremely unreliable": Charlotte herself has "greatly exaggerated" one thing, and other biographers have "vastly overstated" another; certain reports are "unlikely." If Juliet Barker likes to sound anything, it is "a cautionary note."

Barker has been the curator and librarian of the Brontë Parsonage Museum and, in the eleven years she spent researching her book, has made a thorough study of all available manuscripts. As a result, her portraits of the Brontës have the fullness of painstakingly examined truth. Charlotte was a spirited and often hysterical young person; she could be selfish, manipulative, and even, on occasion, malicious. Branwell was impulsive and histrionic; he worked successively as a portrait painter, a tutor, and a railway clerk, but there is no doubt that the failure of his literary and artistic ambitions was what led him in the general direction of the bottle. Anne was dutiful and conscientious; one suspects that she had a finer character than all the others put together but was much too reserved to display it. Emily sought comfort in her own imaginative world, and took no interest at all in the real one. For this reason, she was cordially loathed by many of the people who encountered her. "It is curious," Barker writes in one of the most refreshing moments in this always invigorating biography, "that Emily should ever have gained the reputation of being the most sympathetic of the Brontës . . . as all the evidence points to the fact that she was so absorbed in herself and her literary creations that she had little time for the genuine suffering of her family."

Those "literary creations" did eventually find an audience, however shocked it purported to be. Charlotte, predictably, was the driving force behind the

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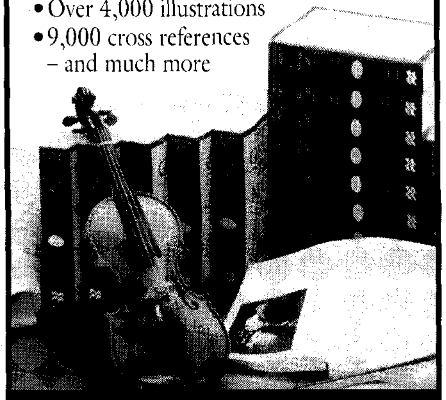

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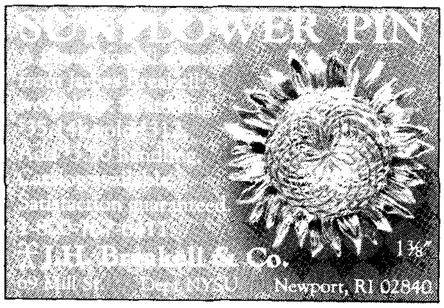

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first publication in book form of the sisters' works, in 1846, under the masculine pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. They "began the world," to use a contemporaneous phrase, with a volume of poems, from which they excluded the work of their brother; Barker describes this act as "petty and mean." In fact, Branwell's alienation from his sisters' joint endeavors may have been partly responsible for his alcoholism. It is not fashionable, nor has it ever been, to take the male side in this particular situation—but there is an argument to be made that the Brontë father and brother were in some sense the victims of these three difficult women. Charlotte's iron will and Emily's imaginative remoteness, for example, must have created an atmosphere as heady as that of Branwell's drunkenness.

The book of poems sold only two copies, and Charlotte decided that they should all move quickly into prose. She published "Jane Eyre" in 1847; later that same year, Emily and Anne published "Wuthering Heights" and "Agnes Grey," respectively. "Jane Eyre" was an almost unprecedented success. The other two novels did much better than the poems, but their earliest critics generally regarded the narratives as wild and depraved, and they were, of course, right. "Wuthering Heights" is an extraordinary emanation from a lonely and self-sufficient sensibility, looking within itself and finding an entire history of human passion. "Agnes Grey" is, frankly, gray, and the truth is that Anne Brontë would probably not be remembered for her own sake—although her second book, "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall," does possess moments of genuine horror. Nevertheless, she has been lifted into immortality in the arms of her sisters.

Charlotte is quite another case. She was clearly possessed of genius, and, of all the sisters, she had both the most capacious and the most singular mind. She had Emily's streak of wildness and wilderness somewhere within her, but she also had a very strong sense of the substantiality of things. She was as much interested in the poetry of the world as she was in the romance of the sensibility, and she is certainly the greatest describer of weather in the English language. But one thing marked her out from the beginning: she never stopped writing about sex. She was called the Byron of the novel and a literary Salvator Rosa; her métier was described as "love agony." All these characterizations meant the same thing: she was obsessed with sexual relations and sexual repression alike. When she was eventually "outed" as a woman and a minister's daughter, one critic said that she immediately "forfeited the society of her own sex." But this, alas, had already happened in another sense.

DEATH was never far away from the Brontës. In 1848, Branwell, half dead from gin and opium, completed the process by succumbing to tuberculosis, at the age of thirty-one. "In all my past life," he declared on his deathbed, "I have done nothing either great or good." Charlotte was more composed, and described his passing as a "mercy," but it was in fact only the beginning of her troubles. Emily, too, was being wasted by tuberculosis, and consistently refused medical aid. "She made haste to leave us," Charlotte wrote later. It was as if she could not wait to depart from a world she had barely noticed. Anne followed a few months later, as calm and as patient as she had always been. The three of them had died within eight months, as if they felt they belonged together in death as well as in life.

Charlotte, the only sibling left, went back to her work. It seemed to be the only consolation she had, and after the publication of "Shirley," in late 1849, she recovered her ambition. She visited London's literary lions on occasion, to a somewhat mixed reception. Thackeray called her "a very austere little person," and one evening he slipped out of his house to avoid meeting "the She-Author." But she was never comfortable in "society." She was nervous of strangers and always self-conscious about her appearance. On being asked if she liked London, she considered the matter for a few moments and then replied, gravely, "Yes and no." At Haworth, she became even more miserable: she was often ill with colds and fevers, was generally lonely and unable to work, and was always surrounded by "the saddest memories" of those with whom she had once shared her life. Now there was only her father.

Yet eventually she gathered the necessary strength to finish "Villette," and

AT THE GALLERIES

GATHERING MOSS

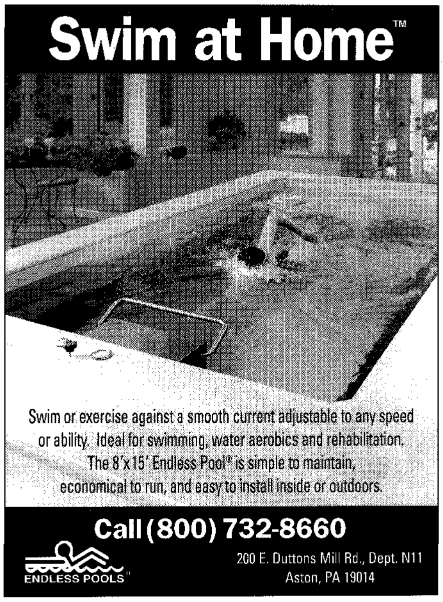
BY JAMES WOLCOTT

SHOULDN'T Kate Moss have the decency to decompose? Doesn't she know her frail, luminous flutter before the fashion lens is just so early nineties? We're in the mid-nineties now. Doesn't she understand how trends eat their young? Since her initial appearances in *The Face*, in 1990, Moss has managed to inflame controversy without making a peep. Of all the recent models, she seems the most mute. Although she's not as stringbeanlike as many catwalk creatures, she quickly came to epitomize the model as hunger artist—death on a stick. Why her? Perhaps it's the baby bump of her stomach, which suggests a begging bowl ("Feed me," people scrawled across the Calvin Klein ad posters that featured her), or the way dresses drip off her like seaweed. Whatever the reason, Moss became the dartboard for every point to be made about bad female body image. Then the waif look wafted to the Victorian attic; the lank hair and greasy skin of grunge died at the box office with "Reality Bites." Yet Moss remains, like a moth stuck to a screen door.

In fact, she is enjoying a mini-revival. From September 12th to 14th, the James Danziger gallery is presenting a photo retrospective of Moss. Her freckled face also floats from the cover of "Kate: The Kate Moss Book." The very idea seems like a blow to literacy, and, indeed, its skimpy text does appear to be written for the hard of reading. An open letter from Moss herself takes up only two pages. She writes, "To say this book is about me (which is the MAIN reason I was uncomfortable—me, me, me, me, me . . . *Frightening!*) is ridiculous." But Moss does manage to say something intriguing. Shrugging off the mean lies that have been written about her, she remarks, "The more visible they make me, the more invisible I become." It's true. Kate Moss is everywhere and nowhere, easily accessible and vaguely remote. There's a real person attached to her X-ray, who sometimes reveals the flip side of her desolate image. ♦

PHOTOGRAPH BY
ENRIQUE BADULESCU

Kate Moss, London, 1991.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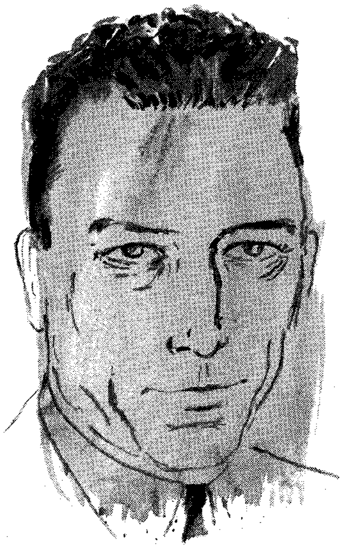
also to put her sisters' affairs in order. In 1850, she wrote a short biographical memoir, which in retrospect seems much more patronizing than she can ever have intended. She hardly wondered, she said, at the "unfavourable reception" of "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall," for her sister Anne was, after all, "slightly morbid." Barker notes the censoriousness of this surviving sister, and goes on to suggest (with good reason) that Charlotte burned the manuscript of Emily's unpublished second novel—"this act of wilful destruction" based upon Charlotte's belief that her sister's "unsophisticated culture" had lapsed into bad taste. It would be of a piece with Charlotte's somewhat domineering attitude toward her sisters in life, yet it is revealed as one of the most shocking episodes in the entire Brontë history. In her memoir Charlotte had said that she "felt it a sacred duty to wipe the dust off their gravestones"; she almost managed to wipe off the names as well.

And then, dear reader, she married. She wed her father's curate, whom she had once ostentatiously disliked. She was happy at last, just like one of her heroines. She wrote playful notes to her friends, quite unlike the severe dispatches of earlier years, and became every inch the curate's busy wife. Nine months later, she was dead: at the age of thirty-eight, she was too old, or too frail, to endure a pregnancy. Now the legend could flourish. It began with what has become known as "the school of poor Charlotte," ably assisted by Mrs. Gaskell, but soon spread to the other Brontë sisters. Their story has since been taken up by feminists, psychoanalysts, and cultural historians. If you visit Haworth today, you will find Brontë mugs and paperweights, Brontë thimbles and tea towels, Brontë quill pens and embroidery sets: kitsch or memorabilia according to taste. There are even replica heads. But Barker realizes that biography itself should not carve stone or plaster images; and here, in "The Brontës," the three sisters are restored to life. ♦

STRANGER NO MORE

An unfinished novel recasts a career.

BY SCOTT L. MALCOMSON



Albert Camus

KAREN CALDICOTT

In his final and most autobiographical novel, "The First Man," translated from the French by David Hapgood (Knopf; $23), Albert Camus falls apart. He tells us that his third-person proxy, Jacques Cormery, always believed that "he had himself well in hand." This belief ends as he stands before his father's headstone. "In the strange dizziness of that moment, the statue every man eventually erects and that hardens in the fire of the years, into which he then creeps and there awaits its final crumbling—that statue was rapidly cracking, it was already collapsing." Camus built his own statue early. He was born into poverty in Algeria in 1913. His first published novel, "The Stranger," appeared in 1942, when he was twenty-eight; "The Plague" followed five years later, just after the war. Incredibly, his work in the Resistance did not prevent him from writing two of our century's greatest novels.

But by the nineteen-fifties the French had begun to dismantle his statue, not least for political reasons. Camus disliked party orthodoxies, hated terrorism, and loved the multiracial society of his youth. And so, with the bloody polarization of the Algerian conflict and the hardening ideologies of French politics, his public credibility steadily weakened; meanwhile, the literati were saying he had lost his creative grip. "At the time of his death," Camus's daughter writes in a prefatory note to "The First Man," "he was very much isolated and subject to attacks from all sides." He died in 1960, in a car crash, at the age of forty-six. From a briefcase in the wreckage came "The First Man," in which Camus crumbles his statue all by himself. Fearing a hostile reception, the family withheld it from publication. And, indeed, the book, far from finished, does not succeed as a novel; in every other respect, it is a work of genius.

THE story begins in an Algerian hovel: a woman, lying before a hastily built fire, gives birth to a boy, Jacques. Camus then moves ahead several decades to Saint-Brieuc, Brittany, where Jacques has finally given in to his mother's requests and visited the grave of his father, who died there of war wounds when the boy was less than a year old. Camus portrays Jacques as a cool, lithe, somewhat disdainful outsider, a character familiar from the earlier novels. Then Camus writes:

> Suddenly he was struck by an idea that shook his very being. He was forty years old. The man buried under that slab, who had been his father, was younger than he. And the wave of tenderness and pity that at once filled his heart was not the stirring of the soul that leads the son to the memory of the vanished father, but the overwhelming compassion that a grown man feels for an unjustly murdered child—something here was not in the natural order and, in truth, there was no order but only madness and chaos when the son was older than the father. The course of time itself was shattering around him.

He returns to Algeria, hoping to piece time back together, and the novel jumps among extended recollections of youth and the adult Jacques's attempts to explain his present by means of his past.

Camus's best-known novel, "The Stranger," is a starkly lit murder story. The killer-protagonist, Meursault, blames his crime on the sun: "It seemed to me as if the sky split open from one end to the other to rain down fire." It is a novel of terrible, and youthful, directness. "The First Man," written at the end of Camus's life, is a novel of night: the fast-falling night of North Africa; the violence and fear that crowd little Jacques's mind, what Camus calls "the night inside him"; the night of death in which his father vanished; above all, the night of his mother—one of longing and wordless endurance. "O mother," Camus writes, in an interleaf appended to this edition, "forgive your son for having fled the night of your truth."

"The First Man" is perhaps the most honest book Camus ever wrote, and the most sensual. Carefully distanced, high-minded abstraction was his greatest weakness as a writer. In nonfiction he overcame it only when he was engaged in combat—in his wartime "Letters to a German Friend," and in reports and speeches on Algeria. In his best fiction, the strength of his stories and the distinctive hard lyricism of his prose triumphed over his ambitions as a novelist of ideas. In "The First Man" Camus tries to escape from these ambitions. Instead, he wants the book to be "heavy with things and flesh." He wants it to be true in a way his sun-filled work could not be.

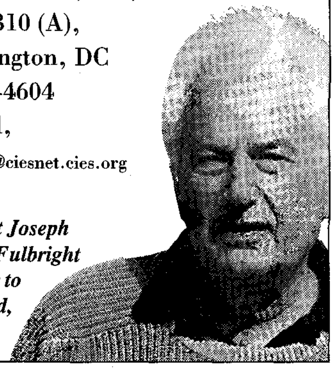
Not all the book's revelations, however, were intended by the author. The text comes with footnotes reproducing various marginalia—corrections and deletions, Camus's instructions to himself—as well as interleaves and notes. It even indicates places where illegible scribblings appeared on the manuscript. Thus it is a confused text. Yet it is almost never confusing, because the marginalia and the notes illumine the struggle at hand. They demonstrate that Camus set himself tasks he knew were impossible: to recover his childhood, to know and understand his father and mother, to grasp "the darkness within him." Above one passage he scrawled, "I need my father." "Careful," he whispers to himself, "change the names." And in the notes he writes, "Do not fear. Fear nothing. But who will help me!" This timorous figure seems very far from the mid-century icon of moral decisiveness. One can see why his character only "creeps" into its statue.

Camus often reminds himself to make Jacques an "alien." But he can no longer pull off such alienation—the estrangement that had been so useful to a younger writer. Instead, a little boy races with his friends through the streets of Algiers and on to the sea, "gentle and warm," where "the sun fell lightly on their soaked heads, and the glory of the light filled their young bodies with a joy that made them cry out incessantly." He and his friends "reigned over life and over the sea, and, like nobles certain that their riches were limitless, they heedlessly consumed the most gorgeous of this world's offerings." Jacques plays with crackling palm fronds in a high wind in the mountains, inhales the scent of every body that comes near him and every tiny change in the weather, devours popular novels under the uncomprehending eyes of his illiterate family, and registers, helplessly, the inexplicable, nearly mute love of his mother. This youth takes up most of the book, and shows a capacity for pleasure which Camus had always possessed but was unable, until now, to put freely on the page. The adult Jacques, for his part, rushes in with screaming interior monologues that skid and splay across time sequences like a horse or a dog that has lost its footing while running on slick pavement. Who will help him?

IN "The First Man" Camus is not writing at the height of his powers; he is writing in the depths of his powers. He was always concerned with courage, honor, the joy of life. Such things do not fit readily into systematic thought, a circumstance that explains a great deal about Camus's awkward relations with the Parisian milieu. People called him a moralist, a humanist, or an existentialist out of Linnaean desperation. Camus's own desperation, in lonely middle age, took him far beyond such categories:

> All that was left was this anguished heart, eager to live, rebelling against the deadly order of the world that had been with him for forty years, and still struggling against the wall that separated him from the secret of all life, wanting to go farther, to go beyond, and to discover, discover before dying, discover at last in order to be, just once to be, for a single second, but forever.

In a heartbreaking 1959 letter, Camus's great mentor and substitute father, the grade-school teacher Louis Germain, meditated on his pupil's fame and wrote, "You have remained Camus: bravo." As that Camus, he crept from his statue and returned to Algeria, to the sources of his courage and joy. Systematic or not, they remained there in the blazing days and in the night for him to find. In "The First Man" he retrieves them for us. It is perhaps his luck—Camus always had odd luck—to perform here one more brave act, at what would have been the age of eighty-one. ♦



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Novelist Joseph Heller, Fulbright Scholar to England, 1949

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RECOMMENDED READING

Extinction
by Thomas Bernhard; translated from the German by David McLintock
(Knopf; $24)

In this final novel by the late Austrian king of angst, the narrator receives a telegram informing him of the death of his parents and brother and levels a typically Bernhardian diatribe against his family and its coterie of ex-Nazis; he then returns to the provincial family estate to attend to the hatefully punctilious funeral. Bernhard's sublime misanthropy is as gruesomely droll as ever: "On Christmas Eve the whole family sat around in my sisters' knitwear like a bunch of cripples." This work is an appropriate coda to an epic corpus: the author is the indubitable heir to Montaigne, Dostoyevski, and all the other brilliant egoists and paranoiacs who rage against the hypocrisies of their times.

A Civil Action
by Jonathan Harr
(Random House; $25)

A fat, compelling narrative about a suit brought by parents whose children had died of leukemia against two national corporations whose factories, they claimed, had polluted the drinking water in Woburn, Massachusetts. As Harr's account unfolds, the reader learns about the problematic nature of expert testimony and the ruses that ostensibly honest men employ for dishonorable purposes. It's a dismal picture of the bar, and particularly disheartening just now, when Congress seems bent on undermining the environment's legal protections.

Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew
by John Felstiner
(Yale; $30)

This long-overdue study illuminates the rich biographical meaning behind much of Celan's spare, enigmatic verse. Born into a learned Romanian Jewish household in 1920, he studied Hebrew in school and spoke correct, literary German at home. He lost both parents in the Holocaust and was himself sent to forced-labor camps. Felstiner believes that Celan's essential conflicts stemmed from his tortured relationship with the German language, which was his mother tongue as well as that of his family's murderers. He ended his life in 1970, by jumping, unnoticed, into the Seine—sad testament to his belief that "no one / witnesses for the / witness."

How Many Years
by Marguerite Yourcenar; translated from the French by Maria Louise Ascher
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27.50)

This history of the author's paternal Flemish ancestors is motivated by curiosity, not vanity; Yourcenar wants to know how they contrived to flourish during the centuries in which Flanders was Europe's favorite battleground. The author's magical gift for narrative engages us in the destinies of prosperous nobodies, and not until the spell wears off do we recognize that the most interesting figure the clan produced in five hundred years was Yourcenar herself.

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—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

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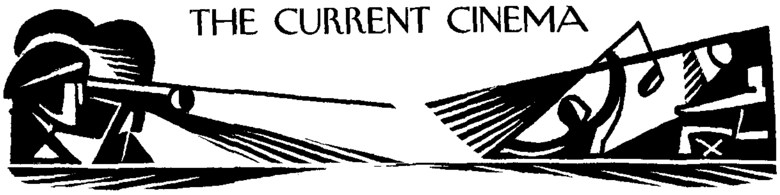


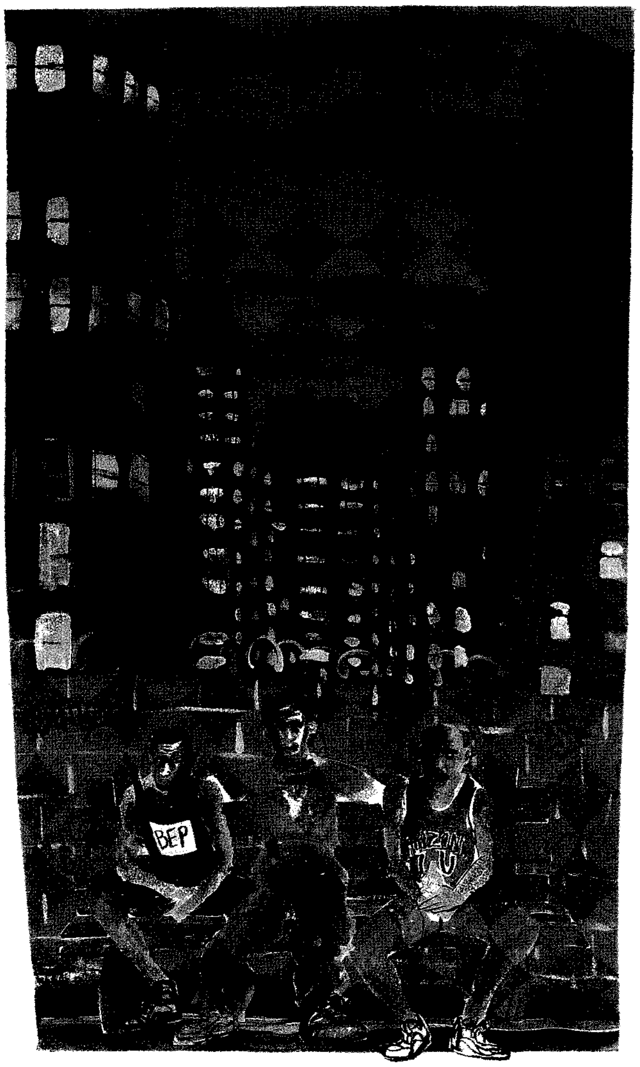
CRACKING UP

In "Clockers," Spike Lee broadens his vision of the streets.

BY ANTHONY LANE

MURDER in the dark; blood all over the place; a black male in custody; a suspicion that he may not be the right man; a white cop who doesn't care if he leads blacks into trouble or pain, and looks away when they get there; a city charged with fear and loathing. It sounds familiar. Spike Lee has been working on "Clockers" for some time, but there is perfect timing—half luck, half pulse-taking—in the decision to release the movie now. With the Fuhrman tapes still ringing in our skulls, there's no better moment to lure us into the theatre and give us two hours of prejudice on parade and truth under siege. If we come out feeling a little blurry, swayed in more directions than we can handle, then the movie has done its work.

The blur begins in the first scene. We see a gaggle of young blacks parking themselves on a circle of benches outside a Brooklyn housing project. It seems a random setting, somewhere to hang out for a while en route to the hub of the action. Slowly, however, we realize that this *is* the action—not merely the movie's center stage but the tightly defined corner of the world in which these youngsters spin out their existence. They give life to this dead end. Just follow their movements—an aimless strolling that resolves itself into a formal pattern as they swap signals across the park. With the coast clear, a package is fetched from indoors and handed to a white man shuffling with nerves and need on the edge of their territory. These guys are the clockers of the title, small fry selling drugs—crack, mostly—around the clock. The camera whips and darts in an effort to keep up with them; the documentary look of this opening sequence seems not so much a choice as a necessity, an agitation demanded by the birdlike rhythms of the dealers themselves.



Waiting for action: Strike (Mekhi Phifer), right, and fellow drug dealers hang out in the projects.

JOE DAVIS

"Clockers" marks one of those welcome occasions on which Spike Lee has got hold of material that enthuses him into a style. In his first and best picture, "She's Gotta Have It," this happened practically all the time, but it grew less frequent as his career swelled. Now he's back on home ground, and for much of the time he's too busy exploring it to think of showing off. He produced the film with Martin Scorsese and Jon Kilik, and wrote the script in collaboration with Richard Price, the author of the novel "Clockers," published in 1992; the book was heavily grounded in the current drug culture and in Price's own youth (he was raised in the projects), and there's something solid about the resulting film, too. It's not as exciting as most thrillers, but there's a heft to it, a willingness to be knowledgeable instead of hip. The early dialogue, out on the benches, is so raucously rich in slang, and so layered with competing voices, that for a while you don't have a clue to what's going on—a distinction that "Clockers" shares, unusually, with most of Shakespeare's history plays. When we hear that a suspect has done "a Carl Lewis," the phrase zips by, sounding just right but leaving us to catch up; Price may well have invented it, but he has the great Chandler trick of persuading us that he picked it up fresh from the street.

What the suspect left behind was the remains of a local scumbag, shot on the threshold of Ahab's fast-food restaurant ("a whale on a bun"). The police arrive, among them Rocco Klein (Harvey Keitel) and his sidekick, Larry Mazilli (John Turturro). They don't just inspect the corpse, they *question* it; the scene gets funnier and more alarming by the second. If this is how the cops treat the Brooklyn dead, you wonder, what sort of respect do they show to the living? Rocco has been in the job for more than twenty years, and he came down from high ideals so long ago that he can't remember what they look like; his soul is about as healthy as the body in Ahab's doorway. Rocco soon gets a confession, from a man named Victor (Isaiah Washington), but he doesn't believe it; Victor is a family type, with two children, two jobs, and no record. Rocco wants a killer who makes sense—someone like Victor's brother Strike (Mekhi Phifer), a lazy clocker who lives on drug money and chocolate milk. Strike is so battered by the projects that even his guts are a war zone; he coughs up blood in the street. He has the means and the motive to take another's life; he even has the name. In the world according to Rocco Klein, that makes him guilty.

But everyone in "Clockers" has his own world—tough and obdurate, veering away from the rest. The movie is all planets and no sun; there's no one central performance that pulls the action together and sets the pace, as Denzel Washington's did in "Malcolm X." Keitel is as sure as ever, dangerously wise, and he doesn't blink at the notion of playing a bastard, but the movie denies him depth; a couple of scenes at home, off the streets, and we could have reached all the way into Rocco Klein. Turturro pretty well fades from view, and, while Mekhi Phifer, a newcomer to the screen, gives off a troubled calm, he doesn't have the experience to carry us through Strike's rite of passage. He's at the heart of the plot, but he doesn't make the movie—the movie somehow happens to him. I suspect that all this is deliberate; Spike Lee is intent on a public composition, on ranks of people who glow and fade in and out of the big picture. He has shifted back to the half-crazed ensemble work of "Do the Right Thing," where the various story lines crowded in on us and yelled for our attention—no wonder audiences got worked up. "Clockers" is a better and riper picture, less tempted by hysteria, but beneath it runs the same flow of fate, the rolling force of a society that is almost comically stronger than any of the individuals who tumble into its path. More than once, Strike has the chance to quit town, and he can't do it. He doesn't love the projects, but he's screwed into their moral machinery, and that comes to the same thing.

The result is that Strike, against all expectation, sneaks within range of our sympathy. This is the great skill of "Clockers": it's a film about confusion, about a clouded murder mystery that won't clear, and yet no one is more profitably confused than those of us trying to read its climate. Watching this movie, we are all Rocco Kleins: we start with a firm take on the characters and soon find them slipping out of sight. Is Strike a hero or the naughty boy of a morality tale? And what about his black acquaintances? There's the giant project cop, Andre (Keith David), who knows the clockers well and tries to stop crime from closing over their heads; but nothing is more frightening than his threat of punishment. Then, there's Rodney (Delroy Lindo), the king of the neighborhood: barber, supplier of crack ("truth serum," he calls it), and father figure to Strike. Rodney's advice is to deal drugs but never take them: whether that counts as a good living or the worst kind of death, the movie leaves us to decide. When you see the weaklings who feed on Rodney's supply, you can hardly blame the guy; the best sequence in the film comes when a Mercedes full of white preppies pulls up at Ahab's and they meet a cop. "You got any drugs," he warns them, "I got thirteen baboons in a cage calling you Mary all night long."

SPIKE LEE wants "Clockers" to argue with itself, and all credit to him; he doesn't set out to be controversial at any cost, as Larry Clark does so boringly in "Kids." But Lee doesn't stop there: he also wants his movie to *look* like an argument. The grit of the first scene goes on rattling, but other styles intrude—the director of photography, Malik Sayeed, keeps switching film stocks and color intensities—until the movie itself becomes a kind of racial mix. We hit graying, slow-motion shots of a rainy street, snatches of rap video, and an absurd closeup of Rocco reflected in the pupil of Strike's eye. You get the point—wherever the wanted man looks, his nemesis is always there, filling his vision like a speck of dirt—but you can't help feeling that the means is swamping the message. And yet again we have to sit through a couple of Lee's jokey back-projections: in "Jungle Fever" it was a couple coasting down a street, and here it's Harvey Keitel perched in midair beside a kid's bike, lecturing him while the park rolls by behind. Why bother with this art-school self-consciousness? Lee's movie is broad and well built enough to stand up straight; we don't need to be taken aside and reminded that it is only a story. The film is most impassioned when it drops the tricks and simply watches people going about their business or else giving it up in despair. When Victor is asked how he felt on the night of the murder, he says that he was tired, "just tired." Isaiah Washington's finely expressive face maps out that fatigue—the lifelong effort required to remain a good man, and the awful relief of finally letting go.

I don't really get everything that happens in "Clockers." As Strike asks Rocco toward the end, why should a white cop—especially a cop with no heart, a tin man close to retirement—have bothered about a black-on-black shooting, when the victim was a nobody and the murderer has already owned up? There is no answer to this, apart from the fact that Richard Price needed such a hook if he was going to poke around in a crack-rimmed world and satisfy his curiosity: he had to saddle Rocco with a hunger for the truth, even though it's perfectly clear that Rocco himself would have preferred a corned-beef sandwich. As plots go, it's fairly frail—not a patch on Price's twisting contrivances for "Sea of Love." The closing revelation in "Clockers" is no surprise at all; you just sit there and nod sagely in confirmation. But then Lee isn't out to shock us at the climax; he wants to drip-shock us through the entire movie, starting with the photographs of gunshot victims which float through the opening titles (overlaid by a tender ballad, just to freak us out). "Clockers" is only half as much fun as a film like "Sea of Love," but it has twice the ambition—it gathers its reports from the front line, bears down on the audience, and hassles us. I didn't believe in some of the things I saw in this movie; yet I somehow believed the movie. The weird chords that it picks out, unlikely combinations of hope and malevolence, make the right kind of noise for an age that is off key. The final shots of Strike and Victor, as each finds a transient freedom, are slight and sentimental, and they suggest that Spike Lee's heart has been in the right place all along. I'm not sure, though. I reckon his heart is jumping around, and that is why, for all the polemical push and sheer itchiness of his work (and maybe, on occasion, because of them), he remains one of the few filmmakers who still beat time to America. ♦

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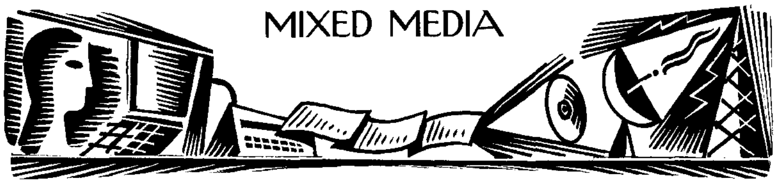


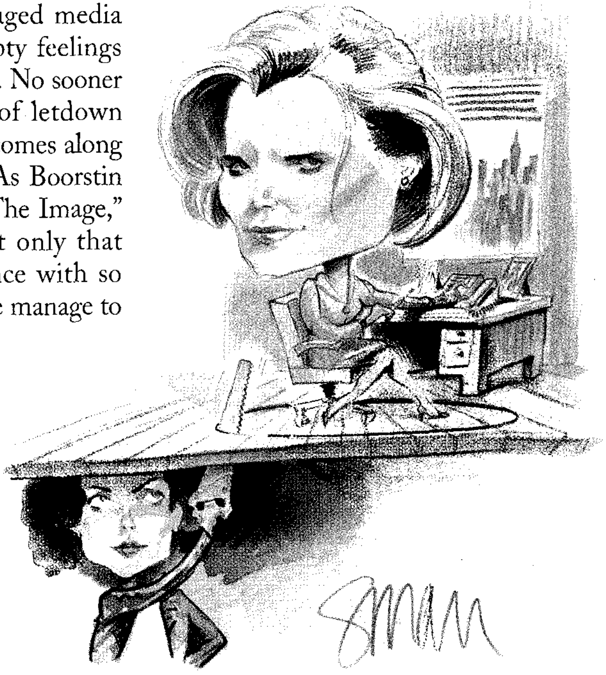
THE BIG TEASE

"Central Park West" and other pseudo-events.

BY JAMES WOLCOTT

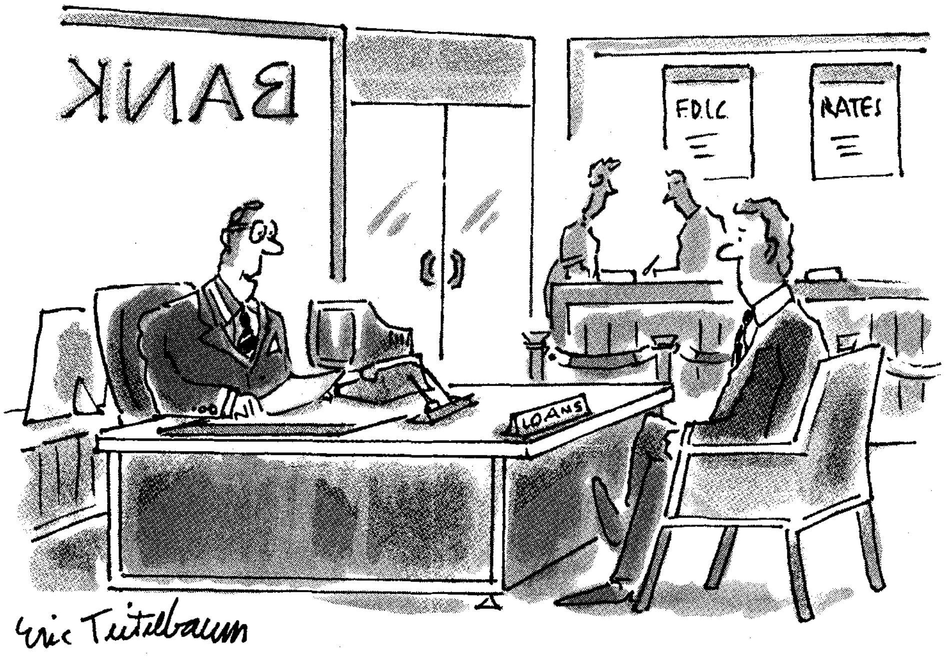
IN the future, after all the media have conglomerated into one big cyclops, we'll be able to live in a state of permanent distraction. Our bodies will function as consoles to support the video modules on our shoulders. Until then, while we can still pretend that our minds are our own, we remain subject to the whim of what the historian Daniel Boorstin has dubbed "pseudo-events"—individually packaged media hubbubs that feed our empty feelings until we feel temporarily full. No sooner do we experience a sense of letdown than another pseudo-event comes along to feed us a Happy Meal. As Boorstin wrote in his classic study "The Image," "what is remarkable is not only that we manage to fill experience with so much emptiness, but that we manage to give the emptiness such appealing variety." From Windows 95 to "Waterworld," from Larry Clark's "Kids" to Calvin Klein's kiddie ads, it has been a bumper year for big nothings. The promotional campaign becomes its own art form. (The medium is the massage—all foreplay.) The musical value of Michael Jackson's "HIStory" album was a minor blip compared to its publicity blitz, capped by the audience Jackson and his wife, Lisa Marie, granted Diane Sawyer on ABC's "PrimeTime Live." Studying their android body language was more interesting than listening to "HIStory" 's syncopated slush. This summer, *New York*, *Newsweek*, and *Esquire* all mounted the centaur head of John Kennedy, Jr., on their covers, his appearance pegged to the inaugural issue of the political magazine *George*: never mind that none of them had an interview with him, that it isn't clear what input he has at *George*, or whether the publication itself will be anything more than action photos of policy wonks on the phone.

The biggest pseudo-event of the fall TV season is the new soap "Central Park West," or "C.P.W." for short, which premières on September 13th on CBS. Thus far, on-the-set reports have appeared in *Vogue*, *Allure*, the New York *Observer*, the *Times*, and this magazine's Talk of the Town. Indeed, "C.P.W." has received so much press that the show itself looks like a magazine spread, a glossy feature piece about its own stars. The publicity for "C.P.W." is as integral to its identity as the final package is. Given the track record of its creator and executive



Mariel Hemingway and Mädchen Amick in "C.P.W." Further evidence of how New York is being subdivided by Hollywood into chunks of unreal estate.

DAVID SMALL



"Do you want the loan to go or will you spend it here?"

producer, Darren Star (one of those too perfect toothpaste names, like Frankie Avalon and Sandra Dee), "C.P.W." can only be trash. But is it good trash or bad trash? And does that make any difference?

Often described as a wunderkind, Darren Star was the creative bean behind the Aaron Spelling hits "Beverly Hills 90210" and "Melrose Place." And, in the same way that the former programming genius at ABC, Fred Silverman, was blessed with a golden gut—a sympathetic craving for what the mass audience wanted—Star has a warm stethoscope planted between the silicone breasts of white suburban upscale desire. He harmonizes with the hopes and aspirations of shallow swingers in apartment complexes everywhere. His shows validate Albert Goldman's contention that a lack of talent no longer need be a detriment to advancement. "Never in the history of show biz has the gap between amateur and professional been so small," Goldman once wrote. "And never in the history of the world has there been such a rage for exhibitionism. The question is, therefore, what are we going to do with all these beautiful show-offs?" Star's (and Spelling's) solution is to clothe them in clingy bodywear and let them model their muscle tone, posing as real people. When the performers are not engaged in catfights, they fidget within a small range of likable sincerity. (Once they violate the acceptable norm, as "90210" 's Shannen Doherty did, they're evicted from the Jacuzzi.) Every Darren Star series for Spelling was a study in the mating habits of narcissists. The men whip off their shirts, the women whip off their blouses, all of them grappling like panting animals for the best camera angle. Star, who is no longer working for Spelling, now makes auteur noises about his "sensibility," about "accessing" his "ambitious nature." He informed *Vogue* that " 'Central Park West' is a reflection of the life I'm living now." He's living large.

Despite its fancy address, "Central Park West" is a workplace-oriented show, set in the madcap, treacherous world of glossy-magazine journalism, where everyone sips champagne and has porcelain skin. It is a world I have prowled for more than fifteen years, so I can say with some authority, "Huh? Say what?" Mariel Hemingway stars as Stephanie Wells, an editor shipped fresh from Seattle—"where I published *Body* magazine and grew it into the No. 1 fitness publication in the country." She's been empowered to arrest the erosion of a general-interest slick called *Communiqué*. No one can say she doesn't glow. According to *Allure*, Hemingway's makeup, by Margot Boccia, "is ultrasoft, starting with some bisque foundation mixed with a touch of Shu Uemura cream foundation, and lips shimmering with François Nars's Honolulu Honey." A healthy and radiant six-footer, Hemingway has stature but no authority. She addresses her staff as if she were welcoming toddlers to day care. Her editorial vision for *Communiqué* is a vague mandate for change, undercut by her comment that if she can do nothing but bring down production costs she'll consider it a job well done. Tightening budgets, how exciting. One might argue that the show is setting her up as a nursery marm only to smarten and toughen her up later, but Hemingway's performance on the dark-spirited Stephen Bochco lawyer show, "Civil Wars," indicates that she just doesn't have it in her to be an office infighter. She's deadeningly nice.

Her boss is Allen Rush (Ron Leibman), a print magnate who presides over a powerful empire of imaginary publications. He's a little dictator with a gracious public smile, which he switches in private chat into gritted teeth of steel, grating instructions from the side of his mouth like Al Capone ordering a rubout. "I've had it with that little bitch," he says of his stepdaughter, Carrie (Mädchen Amick), an overpaid columnist for *Communiqué*. "Make her miserable. See that she quits," he tells a stunned Stephanie. "Otherwise you may be the one standing on the unemployment line." At first, Leibman appears guilty of overacting, but then you realize that, with all the nonacting on "C.P.W.," any acting seems like overacting. Amick's Carrie bops onscreen dressed in black, with a lit ciggy cocked between her red nails, her manner proclaiming "downtown chick with attitude." She's bohemian in her life style (dig that spacious loft), sassy in bed (she dismisses a hunky bedmate as if he were a disposable bottle), and powerfully connected to boldface names; she physically resembles Maura Moynihan but behaves like an evil Elizabeth Wurtzel—off Prozac and ready to roll naked in ill-gotten royalties. "Enjoy the delusion of power while it lasts, 'cause when reality hits it can be a real bitch," she snarls at Steph during their first editorial f2f.

Carrie sets out to undermine the new boss by abducting her husband (Tom Verica), a fledgling author with a shifty manner, for a romantic helicopter ride. She points out the tall buildings to him, tells him his talent will flourish here. "Hey, easy with the accolades—they go straight to my head," he says. Before long, he's sipping champagne in her loft and showing her his play. The campest character in the show, and the richest source of cheap laughs, is Carrie's brother, a John Kennedy, Jr., character—lawyer by day, lover by night—played by John Barrowman, a Tom Cruise cutie who's hopelessly hooked on his own studliness. The scenes in which he and his best bud (Justin Lazard) jog together in Central Park are so giddy that the guys seem ready to wrestle to the ground and tickle each other. Theirs is a very special bond.

Articles on "C.P.W." mention that Star and Hemingway visited the offices of *Allure*, *Elle*, and *Vanity Fair*, and met with their editors. They must have all simply stood around and stared at one another, because the show has no inside feel for the rhythm and verbal shorthand of office life. (A true peek into the magazine biz would have the free-floating anxiety and staccato lingo of "The Larry Sanders Show.") Star scorns the petty constraints of realism. "This isn't a documentary—a kind of stultifying, boring, day-to-day life of a magazine," he told the *Observer*. "Nobody's looking for that kind of reality, where the staffers make $18,000 a year. We're not looking through that lens." No, he's looking through a fabulous Lana Turner twinkle filter. In *Vogue* he sounded defensive about his show's glam approach: "The number of people that are able to judge this show [for accuracy] probably numbers about a thousand. If they don't watch, I'm not going to miss them. I'm creating a compelling fantasy out of their mundane reality. Real life is dull." Real life in New York dull? Dear God, did King Kong die for nothing?

Star's verbal recoil at the thought of immersing even an inch of his mind in the mundane lives of nobodies reflects the caste system of Hollywood come East. It's an ironic development. After decades of movies depicting Manhattan as a Venus flytrap for unsuspecting tourists ("The Out-of-Towners"), a steaming plate of Sodom and Gomorrah ("Taxi Driver"), and a post-apocalyptic gulag ("Escape from New York"), this reputed urban war zone has come to be perceived as a safer, saner working/living environment than Los Angeles. The recent earthquakes and post-Rodney King racial tensions have spooked many Hollywood talents and executives, sending them packing to the Hamptons and the hipper Zip Codes of Manhattan. (According to *Vogue*, Star moved into "a chic, three-floor Village apartment owned by model turned restaurateur Eric Petterson.") But many of these Armani refugees show no interest in taking their knocks and becoming real New Yorkers. They're floating in a protective bubble of celebrity, going from one V.I.P. lounge to another in the hope of bumping into Barry Diller. On "C.P.W.," New York isn't a melting pot or a moronic inferno where people of many races, faiths, nationalities, and weird sexual orientations gather together to get on one another's nerves. It's an exclusive party for the blank and the beautiful. Except for Michael Michele, a Vanessa Williams-like stunner, the show's main players are a whiter shade of pale.

If "C.P.W." were only a piece of television, it wouldn't signify. But it's part of a larger makeover trend; its very existence is further evidence of how Manhattan is being colonized by Hollywood and subdivided into chunks of unreal estate. "C.P.W." is the posh face of a corporate push by which West Fifty-seventh Street becomes a merchandise strip for tourists (with stops at Planet Hollywood and the Hard Rock Cafe), and Times Square succumbs to the happy dust of Disney. The city is in danger of losing its grainy originality and becoming an annex of the megamerger entertainment machine—an urban theme park. It's one thing to use the city as a setting and another thing to turn it into a petting zoo. The show's attempts at sophistication—carriage rides around Central Park, a meeting at the Lincoln Center fountain, restaurant chitchat, countless sips of champagne—are obvious and corny. Imagine "Breakfast at Tiffany's" restaged for the Ice Capades and you have the general picture. Of course, "C.P.W." isn't meant to be taken seriously, any more than Star's other series are. It's meant to be kicky, addictive, lower-middlebrow fun—a collagen injection to the brain. That's how it functions as a pseudo-event: the audience's enjoyment of the show involves knowing that it is being suckered, and not minding. As Daniel Boorstin observes, pseudo-events are hoaxes we play on ourselves. Don't know about you, but I'm tired of playing. ◆

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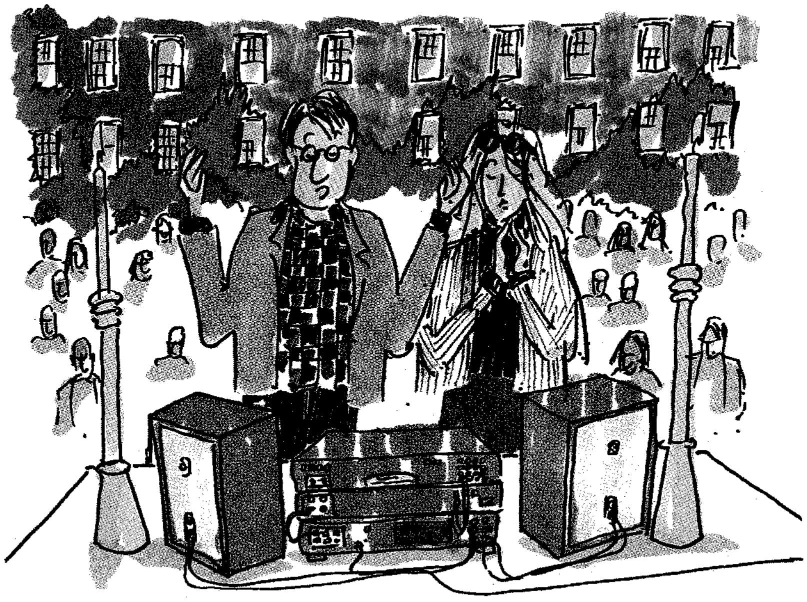
SHOUTS & MURMURS

EMPTY NEST BLUES

BY CHARLES McGRATH

WE delivered our youngest child to college the other day. This was a moment my wife and I had been both dreading and anticipating for weeks, and it happened so swiftly, so unceremoniously, that the actual instant of separation took place almost before we could register it. We unloaded the station wagon: computer, trombone, popcorn maker, roller blades, and, wrapped in the original plastic bag, a Brooks Brothers time capsule—a navy blazer and gray flannels that can be dug up, mold-covered, from the closet four years from now. We met the roommates, shook hands, and stood around awkwardly for a while. We inspected the bunk beds—testing those gridlike springs that with only the slightest squeaks of protest have borne aloft the bodies of so many sleeping freshmen (excuse me, freshpersons)—and toured the unisex bathrooms. (They were—well, unisexual.) We waited in lines for a while, and we wrote a bunch of checks. Then we went out and wandered around town for a bit, and while we were waiting at a corner for a light to change, the nest suddenly emptied. A quick hug, a wave, a promise to call, and, in an instant, he was gone.



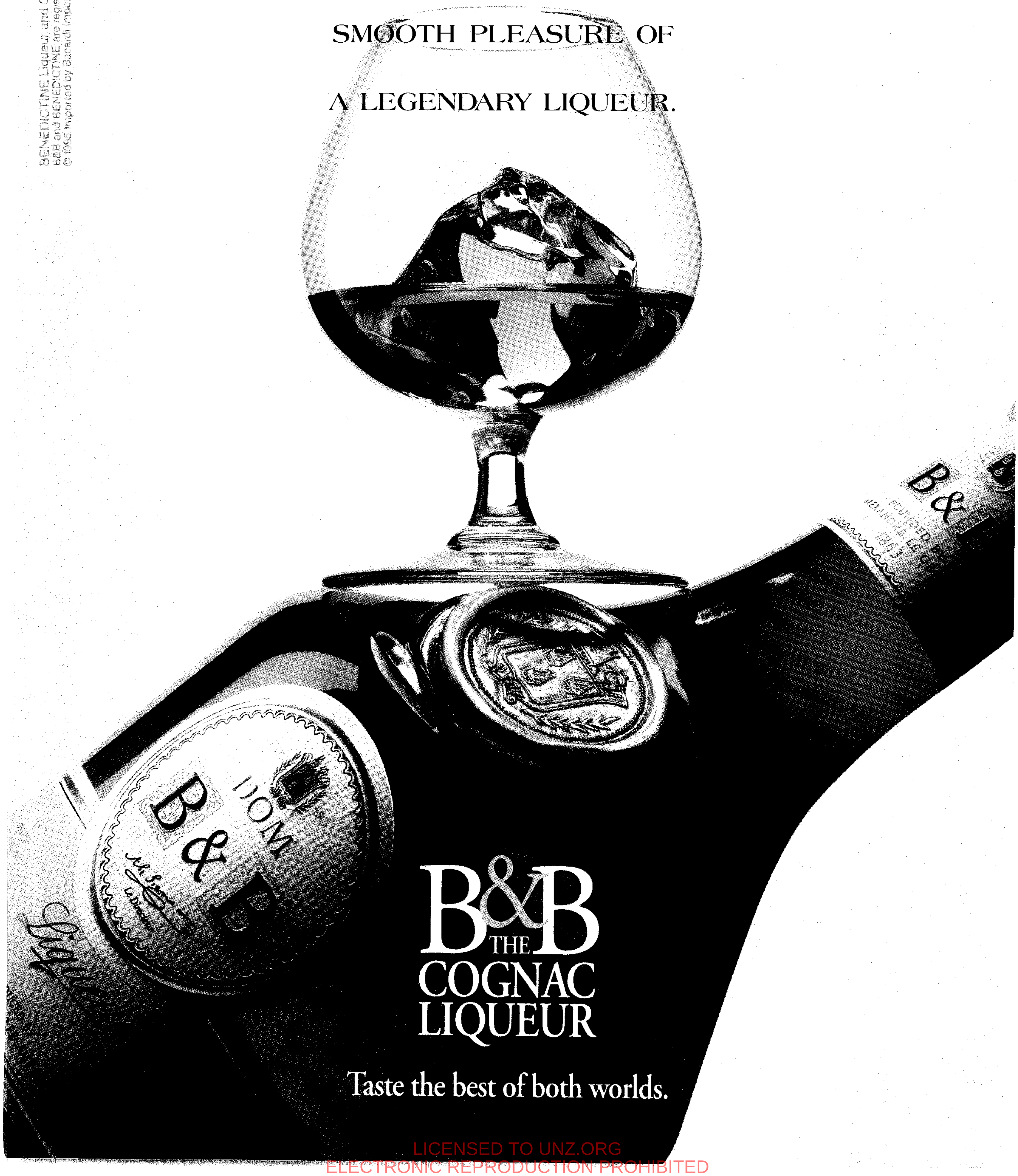
It's too late for us now—we will have to work through our grief in other ways, on our own—but I kept wishing that the college had arranged some ceremony to mark the occasion. A circling of the wagons, perhaps—with those Conestogas of the suburbs, the parental Volvos, Cherokees, and Caravans, lined up according to age and mileage while the dean affixes a brand-new college decal to the rear window of each. Or maybe an interfaith blessing of the first-year stereos, with suitable prayers offered up by the chaplain for hours of distortion-free bass and superior graphic equalization.

As it happens, my son is attending the same institution of higher learning where my parents dropped me off some thirty years ago. My father, who had never been to college, wore his best suit and tie and was so nervous that he couldn't speak. My mother, equally nervous, couldn't stop talking. They've both been dead for years now, but I found myself wondering what they would have made of parents like the couple I saw, in matching shorts, T-shirts, sunglasses, and Tevas, lugging an Oriental rug between them while their daughter trailed behind, bearing a cocktail shaker. Or what would they have made of the safe-sex display in my son's dormitory, featuring not only free condoms but free dental dams and instructions in dental-dam etiquette? (Actually, in my mother's case, I think I know. Sex, she always said, was too beautiful to talk about.)

What would they have made of *me*, for that matter, concerned less with my son than with whether or not I was going to blub? (I didn't, thank goodness.) All over the campus I saw, or thought I saw, dozens and dozens of parents in a similar state, trying not to say or do anything that would embarrass their offspring or themselves. I've never witnessed such a concentration of good behavior.

In private, a couple of us parents remarked that college was wasted on the young, and volunteered to become freshpersons again, now that we know all that we know. In truth, though, we probably don't know the first thing. Who would install our computer software? Who would tell us what music to listen to, and which side to get our ears pierced on? I had a momentary and depressing vision of myself and my roommates of thirty years ago reunited now in the old suite. There we are, four middle-aged guys without a clue. We pop a few brewskies, maybe spark a jay or two—just the way we did in the old days. Somehow, though, it isn't the same. As night falls, we make a big effort. We turn the radio up full blast, put on the bedsheets, and do the toga dance across the quad. It isn't as much fun as we'd hoped. We're tired and out of breath, and our feet hurt. Most of all, we're lonely. We miss the kids. ♦

MICHAEL CRAWFORD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